Gender in medieval places, spaces and thresholds

Gender in medieval places, spaces and thresholds

Edited by
Victoria Blud, Diane Heath and Einat Klafter

LONDON
INSTITUTE OF HISTORICAL RESEARCH

Published by

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON
SCHOOL OF ADVANCED STUDY
INSTITUTE OF HISTORICAL RESEARCH
Senate House, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HU

2019

This book is published under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0) license. More information regarding CC licenses is available at https://creativecommons.org/licenses/

Available to download free at http://www.humanities-digital-library.org or to purchase at https://www.sas.ac.uk/publications

ISBN
978-1-909646-84-1 (hardback edition)
978-1-909646-85-8 (PDF edition)
978-1-909646-86-5 (.epub edition)
978-1-912702-12-1 (.mobi edition)

Contents

List of contributors vii
List of abbreviations xi
List of figures xiii
Foreword. The Virgin of Bethlehem, gender and space xv
Anthony Bale

Introduction 1
Victoria Blud, Diane Heath and Einat Klafter

I. Sacred space 7

1. Religious women in the landscape: their roles in medieval Canterbury and its hinterland 9
Sheila Sweetinburgh

2. Space and place: archaeologies of female monasticism in later medieval Ireland 25
Tracy Collins

3. Making space for leprous nuns: Matthew Paris and the foundation of St. Mary de Pré, St. Albans 45
Philippa Byrne

4. On the threshold? The role of women in Lincolnshire's late medieval parish guilds 61
Claire Kennan

5. Beyond the sea: medieval mystic space and early modern convents in exile 75
Victoria Blud

II. Going places 91

6. Men on pilgrimage – women adrift: thoughts on gender in sea narratives from early medieval Ireland 93
Eivor Bekkhus

7. '*Yfallen out of heigh degree*': Chaucer's Monk and crises of liminal masculinities 107
Martin Laidlaw

8. The feminine mystic: Margery Kempe's pilgrimage to Rome as an *imitatio Birgittae* 123
Einat Klafter

III. A woman's place? 137

9. 'Unbynde her anoone': The *Lives* of St. Margaret of Antioch and the lying-in space in late medieval England 139
Róisín Donohoe

10. Gendered spaces and female filth: Auda Fabri's mystical heresy 157
Kathryn Loveridge

11. Shopping or scrimping? The contested space of the household in Middle English devotional literature 171
Louise Campion

12. Tombscape: the tomb of Lady Joan de Mohun in the crypt of Canterbury cathedral 185
Diane Heath

IV. Watch this space! 203

13. Women's visibility and the 'vocal gaze' at windows, doors and gates in *vitae* from the thirteenth-century Low Countries 205
Hannah Shepherd

14. Women in the medieval wall paintings of Canterbury cathedral 219
Jayne Wackett

15. Commanding un-empty space: silence, stillness and scopic authority in the York *Christ before Herod* 237
Daisy Black

Afterword 251
Leonie V. Hicks

Index 255

List of contributors

Anthony Bale is professor of medieval studies at Birkbeck and has published widely on medieval literature, culture and religion. In particular, his work has explored relations between Christians and Jews in medieval England and, more recently, the culture of medieval pilgrimage. He has also edited and translated several medieval texts, and has recently published a new translation and edition of *The Book of Margery Kempe* with Oxford University Press. His current project explores travel, books and pilgrimage between England and the Holy Land in the later middle ages.

Eivor Bekkhus completed a M.Phil. in Celtic studies at the University of Oslo and is currently studying subjects within linguistics and cultural history, while researching the lives of medieval Irish women. Eivor's interests include Irish voyage tales, medieval gender, how reality inspires fiction, and how fiction informs reality. Besides contributing to the Gender and Medieval Studies conference, Eivor has also delivered papers at the Symposium of Societas Celtologica Nordica, International Congress of Celtic Studies and Leeds International Medieval Congress.

Daisy Black is a lecturer in English literature at the University of Wolverhampton. She is writing a book on time and gender in medieval religious drama. Other research interests include food in medieval drama; medieval antisemitism; spectatorship; lay theology; and medievalism in modern board games. As a theatre practitioner, storyteller and playwright, Daisy has produced creative work for bodies as diverse as the Royal College of Physicians and Manchester cathedral. She is one of the 2018 A.H.R.C./ B.B.C. New Generation Thinkers.

Victoria Blud is a research associate at the Centre for Medieval Studies, University of York. Her book, *The Unspeakable: Gender and Sexuality in Medieval Literature, 1000–1400* explores silencing, marginalizing and strategic erasure in medieval texts, and she has recently begun working on the afterlives of medieval mysticism with the aid of a British Academy/ Leverhulme grant. Her research interests also include cognitive studies and werewolves.

Philippa Byrne is a British Academy postdoctoral fellow in history at Somerville College, Oxford, and a stipendiary lecturer in medieval history at St. John's College, Oxford. Her research concentrates on the history of twelfth- and thirteenth-century England and Sicily and scholastic and theological ideas of authority, order and masculinity.

LOUISE CAMPION is a doctoral candidate in the Department of English and Comparative Literary Studies at the University of Warwick. Her research examines the language and imagery of domestic space in later medieval devotional literature, and the way in which the texts' readers might have responded to such imagery.

TRACY COLLINS is a professional archaeologist and an I.R.C. post-doctoral fellow at the Department of Archaeology at University College Cork. She has published on several aspects of the archaeology of medieval female monasticism in Ireland and is preparing a monograph on the topic.

RÓISÍN DONOHOE is studying for her doctorate in history at the University of Cambridge. Her research examines experiences of childbirth and female lay devotion in late medieval English household manuscripts and material culture.

DIANE HEATH is a research fellow in the Centre for Kent History and Heritage at Canterbury Christ Church University. Her research interests include medieval monasticism, gender, book culture and medieval animal studies. She is currently preparing a monograph entitled *The Bestiary in Medieval Monastic Culture* for University of Wales Press, and she is a series editor for its strand on medieval animals.

LEONIE V. HICKS is a senior lecturer in the School of Humanities at Canterbury Christ Church University. Her research interests lie in the social, cultural and religious history of Europe in the central middle ages, especially the Normans, religious life and gender. Her approach is informed by both historical and archaeological methodologies as well as theory relating to the use and importance of space/place. Her current project is a monograph on Norman landscapes.

CLAIRE KENNAN recently completed her doctorate at the Department of History, Royal Holloway, University of London. Her thesis examines the role of parish guilds in their local communities and their importance in the formation of social and political identities. She was awarded the Barrie Dobson Scholarship in 2017 and is currently a Visiting Teacher in the History Department at King's College London and a Project Officer for the £1 million Heritage Lottery-funded public history project 'Citizens' at Royal Holloway, University of London.

Einat Klafter is a teaching and research associate at the Zvi Yavetz School of Historical Studies at Tel Aviv University. She wrote her doctoral dissertation (Tel Aviv University) on Margery Kempe's critical view of image-aided devotional practices. Einat's research interests focus on late medieval popular devotional practices, female-oriented pilgrimage, construction and conceptualization of sanctity and the language of ecstasy in the *unio mystica*.

Martin Laidlaw is a doctoral candidate at the University of Dundee and a tutor at Newcastle University. Awarded the S.G.S.A.H. Cohort Development Grant in 2017, he is the founder of the ScotM.E.M.S. research network. His research interests include the reformist agenda in Chaucer and Langland, and afterlives of medieval poetry and culture, particularly contemporary adaptations of Chaucer.

Kathryn Loveridge is studying for her doctorate at the Centre for Research into Gender and Culture in Society, Swansea University. Her research focuses on the notion of Christ's transgressive, gendered flesh in western Europe between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries.

Hannah Shepherd completed her doctoral research, funded by the A.H.R.C., in the history department at the University of Edinburgh. Her Ph.D. examined gender and space in *vitae* from the thirteenth-century Low Countries, and she is currently working on a monograph on this theme.

Sheila Sweetinburgh is a principal research fellow in the Centre for Kent History and Heritage at Canterbury Christ Church University and an associate lecturer in the Centre for Medieval and Early Modern Studies at the University of Kent. As well as editing *Early Modern Kent, 800–1220*, *Later Medieval Kent, 1220–1540* and *Negotiating the Political in Northern European Urban Society,* c.*1400*–c.*1600*, she has published numerous articles on medieval Kent. Having worked extensively on Canterbury medieval records, she has recently returned to the county's Cinque Ports and her current project focuses on medieval society in Hythe.

Jayne Wackett is visiting lecturer at the Centre for Medieval and Early Modern Studies at the University of Kent. She is the historian and librarian of Rochester cathedral and curator of the Royal Cornwall Museum, Truro. She is an art historian specializing in works from the medieval period and the Renaissance. Her publications include an appraisal of devotional images in the printed liturgy in Reformation England and the role of English medieval kings in chivalry. She is currently working on a book about Westminster abbey's Litlyngton Missal.

List of abbreviations

Add. MS. 4122	Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, Additional MS. 4122
A.A.S.S.	*Acta Sanctorum*, ed. J. Bollandus, G. Henschenius, *et al.* (Antwerp and Brussels, 1643–) <http://acta.chadwyck.co.uk>
B.H.L.	*Bibliotheca hagiographica latina antiquae et mediae aetatis* (2 vols., Brussels, 1949) <http://bhlms.fltr.ucl.ac.be>
C.C.A.L.	Canterbury Cathedral Archives and Library
Cos. V.II.14	Durham University Library, Cosin V.II.14
Ff.II.38	Cambridge University Library, MS. Ff.II.38
GA	*Gesta Abbatum*
K.H.L.C.	Kent History and Library Centre
T.N.A.	The National Archives of the U.K.
L.A.	Lincolnshire Archives
Lille, A.D.N.	Lille, Archives Départementales du Nord
R.E.E.D.	Records of Early English Drama <http://reed.utoronto.ca>

List of figures

1.1 Map of religious establishments in and around late medieval Canterbury. 7

2.1 Later medieval nunneries in Ireland mentioned in the text. 26

2.2 Kildare cathedral, Co. Kildare, and example of site reuse. This is the supposed location of both the early medieval and later medieval nunnery at Kildare, of which there is now little if any material evidence. 32

2.3 Diversity in nunnery layouts. 36

9.1 Margaret's final prayer with marginal additions in Lydgate's *The Lyfe of Seynte Margarete*, early fifteenth century, England. 146

9.2 Marginal addition blessing those who would honour Margaret's memory in Lydgate's *The Lyfe of Seynte Margarete*, early fifteenth century, England. 147

9.3 Birth scroll depicting the life of St. Margaret, *c.*1465, France. 149

9.4 Marginal addition offering protection against the deformation of newborns, in Lydgate's *The Lyfe of Seynte Margarete*, early fifteenth century, England. 152

9.5 Secular birth scene in the *Passio* of St. Margaret, late fourteenth century, Italy. 153

9.6 Marginal addition depicting Olibirius's name in Lydgate's *The Lyfe of Seynte Margarete*, early fifteenth century, England. 155

9.7 Marginal addition depicting Margaret's prayer for her persecutors in Lydgate's *The Lyfe of Seynte Margarete*, early fifteenth century, England. 156

12.1 Tomb of Joan de Mohun and altar of Blessed Virgin Mary, Canterbury cathedral crypt; the foregrounded nebulé headdress demonstrates the effigial sightline of the altar. 194

12.2 Plan of Canterbury cathedral crypt chapel of the Blessed Virgin Mary from C. E. Woodruff, *Archaeol. Cant.*, xxxviii (1936). 195
12.3 Joan de Mohun's tomb from an engraving in John Dart's *The History and Antiquities of the Cathedral Church of Canterbury* (1726). 197
12.4 Joan de Mohun's tomb photographed by Bill Brandt in 1941. 200
14.1 St. Gabriel's chapel, Canterbury cathedral. Wall painting depicting the naming of John the Baptist. St. Elizabeth semi-reclines on a bed. 221
14.2 Remains of a wall painting border on south-east transept of Canterbury cathedral. 224
14.3 Outlined remains of a wall painting border on south-east transept of Canterbury cathedral. 224
14.4 Man of Sorrows, George Austin's sketchbook. 226
14.5 Mary Magdalene, George Austin's sketchbook. 227
14.6 Wall painting, *c.*1480, of the Legend of St. Eustace on north choir wall, Canterbury cathedral. 229
14.7 St. George, George Austin's sketchbook. 231

Foreword
The Virgin of Bethlehem, gender and space

Anthony Bale

The western European pilgrim to late medieval Bethlehem would have been taken to the Church of the Nativity, the cavernous and storied basilica built over the place where Christ was said to have been born. Most pilgrims visited Bethlehem after seeing Jerusalem and holy places associated with Christ's life and death.

As well as Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity, pilgrims were shown another site, not in the church itself but at its threshold, in a nearby 'field'. This field was known as the flowery field or field of flowers (*Campus floridus*, *Campus florum*) and was a place no less miraculous than the manger in which Christ was born. To quote Sir John Mandeville's widely read and translated *Book of Marvels and Travels* (*c.*1356):

> Between [the Church of the Nativity] and the city [of Bethlehem] is a flowery field, and it's called *Campus floridus* or the Flowery Field on account of a beautiful virgin who was wrongly accused of fornication, for which she was sentenced to be burnt in that place. She was led there, and, as the faggots began to burn, she prayed to Our Lord that He would help her make it known to everyone that she was not guilty. When she had said her prayer thus, she entered the flames, and immediately the fire was extinguished. The burning branches became red rose-bushes, and the branches that were not burning became white rose-bushes full of flowers. These were the first roses and rose-bushes that any person ever saw. And so the virgin was saved through the grace of God, and that's why the field, full of blooming roses, is called Flowery Field [*Campus floridus*].[1]

This is a remarkable story and undoubtedly, apropos of this volume, a story about gender and space. There are many different interpretative directions one might take, but in this context the story encapsulates the main themes of the chapters in this book: sacred space, travel, gendered places and contested spaces and places.

---

[1] Sir John Mandeville, *The Book of Marvels and Travels*, trans. A. Bale (Oxford, 2012), pp. 37–8.

A. Bale. 'Foreword: The Virgin of Bethlehem, gender and space', in *Gender in medieval places, spaces and thresholds*, ed. V. Blud, D. Heath and E. Klafter (2018), pp. xv–xviii.

It is important briefly to interrogate where Mandeville says the *Campus floridus* was. The 'city' of Bethlehem is understood to be the upper city – the area around today's market – so this *Campus floridus* was in the vicinity of the plaza at the threshold of the Church of the Nativity; that is, the *Campus floridus* was about where Manger Square is now, adjacent to the church. The *Campus floridus* thus filled a gap in religious space, between the Church of the Nativity – precious to western Christians, and one of the central places of the Franciscan presence in the Holy Land – and the largely eastern orthodox Christian town of Bethlehem nearby, poised above the church. The *Campus floridus* thus effectively westernized and sacralized something of a frontier zone on the threshold of the Church of the Nativity.

As a narrative, it is pithy, succinct; it moves from exemplary injustice – a beautiful female virgin wrongly accused – to a miracle of divine intervention in control of the natural world ('these were the first roses and rose-bushes that any person ever saw'). The narrative also replicates western moral norms ('fornication' and its punishment) in constructing a pre-history of that exemplary medieval figure, the virgin martyr. This is not an eastern world of wonder, but rather a botanical landscape authored by God through his law. The story's direct source is the Latin *Itinerarium* of pseudo-Odoric, which was one of Mandeville's favourite sources, and the narrative appears in Mandeville's *Book* during a guided tour of the canonical sites of Bethlehem, including the Church of the Nativity. It had therefore become, by the mid fourteenth century, part of the body of knowledge available to western pilgrims travelling in the Holy Land, and the site was exported back to the west as a witnessed, visited 'fact' of the holy landscape. Such a site was more comprehensible to western European pilgrims than the strange, local, and challenging sites, shared with schismatics and heretics, riven with competing narratives, and surrounded by hostile locals.

The rose obviously has a broad symbolism as the medieval flower of secular love, as figured in *Le Roman de la Rose*, but it also had religious meanings that are germane to this place in Bethlehem – a site of both divine childbirth and miraculous intact virginity – for the rose represents both Jesus and Mary. This symbolism has a long heritage, as explored comprehensively by Peter Dronke, who calls our attention to a wide range of sources representing Christ as the flower of God, and draws parallels between the king of kings and *flos florum* (the flower of flowers) born of Mary, herself the divine rose. The red rose is often used in medieval iconography to represent Christ's blood spilt at his Passion, whereas the white rose represents the purity and chastity of both Christ and his mother. We often see bushes or trellises of roses in the background of holy imagery reflecting this idea, as expressed by St. Bernard of Clairvaux, who compared Mary to a white rose for chastity and a red rose for charity, and who invoked the sweet beauty of the rose as the bearer of the thorn with which the infant Christ would be crowned at his death.[2] Dronke writes,

> The rose is an image of perfection often used of the beloved in medieval lyrics of *amour courtois*, but it is remarkable also for the variety of its manifestations – sacred and profane, from a casual *façon de parler* to a philosophical or mystical apprehension of perfect beauty in the paradox of the many and the one.[3]

So the rose was a directly legible, indeed culturally central, symbol for the European pilgrims looking for sacred origins in the Holy Land, and the story of the Virgin of Bethlehem neatly brought together this imagery in an informal but venerable spatial tradition.

Thomas Larke was the chaplain of Sir Richard Guylforde, an English administrator and pilgrim, from Cranbrook, near Tunbridge Wells (Kent). In 1505 Larke and Guylforde travelled together to the Holy Land; Guylforde died there, but Larke wrote up an account of the journey as *The Pylgrymage of Sir Richard Guylforde*, in a highly conventional travel narrative, borrowing Mandeville's words to describe their visit to Bethlehem: 'And bytwene þe Cytie and þe sayd church is þe felde Floridus, where þe fayre maydon shuld have ben brent and was saved harmelesse by myracle of fyre chaunged into roses'.[4] By this point, the story, 'the miracle of fire changed into roses' has the ring of a well-known narrative, something that Larke is merely summarizing because the trial of the 'fayre maydon' was well known. Larke, like other pilgrims who mention the *Campus Floridus*, actually visited the site, but it is not clear what he saw there. There was no formal shrine, altar, or building, but there may have been unofficial markers, and perhaps even rose bushes; it is also possible that pilgrims like him were told the story by their Franciscan guides, or that they knew the story from their own reading of Mandeville – and we know that Mandeville was a major source for him. Was the *Campus Floridus* a 'real place' or was it a 'memory place', which existed in narrative only?

Rather than offering answers to such questions, I raise this source here to provoke us into thinking about the issues raised at the wonderful Gender and Medieval Studies conference held at Canterbury in January 2017, from which this volume developed. The following chapters ask us to think about how gender is formed or evoked in contingent relationships with space and place. We learn how gendered precepts like marriage, virginity, sex and martyrdom, are involved in the uses of space. We learn too of the dynamic relationship between travel and the experience of gender. How does gender interact with or effect experience of place? And what is the role of the idea of gendered 'nature' – encapsulated in Bethlehem in the account of the birth of roses – in modulating the historical experience of place?

---

[2] L. Ross, *Medieval Art: a Topical Dictionary* (Westport, Conn., 1996), p. 90.

[3] P. Dronke, *Medieval Latin and the Rise of the European Love Lyric* (2 vols., Oxford, 1968), i. 181–2.

[4] *The Pylgrymage of Sir Richard Guylforde to the Holy Land, A.D. 1506*, ed. H. Ellis (Camden Society, li, 1851), p. xx. The identification of Larke was made by R. Lutton, 'Richard Guldeford's pilgrimage: piety and cultural change in late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century England,' *History*, xcviii (2013), 41–78.

In medieval Bethlehem, at the threshold of holiness, the regulation of desire and the memory of violence, were inscribed in the landscape through the widely known, if informal story of the failed burning of the virgin. For the pilgrim, the story narrates the importance and power of individual prayer in the face of a hostile majority. The pilgrim, male or female, identifies with the accused female virgin: like the virgin, the pilgrims were prone, imperilled, in a hostile place but, through God's grace, they survived to find themselves spiritually edified through visiting the site of Christ's birth.

Introduction

Victoria Blud, Diane Heath and Einat Klafter

This book is about the where, when and how of sex, death and power in the middle ages. The interdisciplinary chapters in this volume analyse places, spaces and thresholds through a gender perspective, offering provocative readings of medieval texts, images and material culture. They examine medieval spaces, networks, real and literary landscapes, drama and material culture to question and offer new insights into medieval societies and communities. The volume brings together experts in the fields of drama, history, archaeology, art history, material culture and manuscript and literary studies, whose insights speak to one another in exciting and productive ways. Foundation myths of royal incest link sixth-century Irish tales to a fourteenth-century English chronicle; giving birth is contrastingly connected to heretical psychosis, dragon-slaying and sanctifying pilgrimage; celibacy is viewed as fallible bodily enclosure, just as communal enclosures – walls – are recognized as pierced entry points; convents are re-envisioned not as vulnerable but strategic places of quotidian female power and authority. Little-studied texts and records are brought to light alongside the re-exploration of well-known works by Chaucer, Margery Kempe and St. Bridget of Sweden. The urban is read against both the hinterland and the wilderness; networks can encompass both the elite and the exiled.

The theoretical considerations of space and place have been much discussed in medieval studies in recent years. These studies explore the cultural geography of nationhood, the negotiations of urban space, the many ways of conceptualizing the threshold and the vital importance – and simply the vitality – of sacred space.[1] Anthony Bale has recently published two timely translations of *The Book of Margery Kempe* (2015) and *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* (2012), prompting renewed consideration of the nature

---

[1] See K. Lavezzo, *Imagining a Medieval English Nation* (2004); C. Clarke, *Literary Landscapes and the Idea of England, 700–1400* (2006) and *Mapping the Medieval City: Space, Place and Identity in Medieval Chester* (2011); *Thresholds of Medieval Visual Culture: Liminal Spaces*, ed. E. Gertsman and J. Stevenson (Woodbridge, 2012); *Place, Space and Landscape in Medieval Narrative*, ed. L. Howes (2007).

V. Blud, D. Heath and E. Klafter, 'Introduction', in *Gender in medieval places, spaces and thresholds*, ed. V. Blud, D. Heath and E. Klafter (2018), pp. 1–6.

of travel, faith, space and place. Gendered sacred space has been a particularly fruitful area of enquiry: Liz Herbert McAvoy brought a feminist focus to the investigation of the medieval anchorhold and surveyed this location anew; Virginia Chieffo Raguin and Sarah Stanbury directed attention to the role of women in supporting the creation of sacred space and places of worship; Clare Lees and Gillian Overing brought the gendered experience of place to the gendered expression of faith, and Roberta Gilchrist's work in archaeology examined how gender is spatially mapped within religious institutions.[2] This volume complements these and other collaborative efforts that have explored different ways of conceptualizing medieval place and landscape.

The spatial turn continues to resonate deeply with studies of gender and sexuality, and gendered readings of medieval place, space and liminalities still have much to offer in terms of illuminating the history of cultural practices, including literary and artistic creation. Perhaps this is not surprising: spaces continue to change, and our experiences and interpretations change with them. Medieval gender studies are a particularly fruitful lens through which to address issues of place, space and threshold because such studies allow us to examine exclusion, seclusion, escape, expulsion and stereotyping in relation to their historical, artistic and cultural contexts. As Anthony Bale notes in his foreword, this collection addresses the dynamic relationships between gender and spaces in order to contribute to our understanding of the locational impact of gendered precepts, for example, 'cosynage' (Laidlaw) and childbirth (Loveridge, Donohoe); a broad scope that includes lay and religious engagement with space and thresholds (Kennan, Klafter, Byrne). As people and texts are shown to gain and lose their 'places', the chapters in this book also consider how the conceptualization and imaginative use of space changes and evolves in literature and informs a critical discourse on questions of gender, speaking to both geographical locations and to imagined landscapes and lands (which are often shown not to be mutually exclusive categories).

Doreen Massey has productively written of space as an *event*, a play of construction, designation, disintegration, reformation, unpredictable and unforeseeable interaction and constant flux. For Massey, space 'is always in the process of being made. It is never finished, never closed'.[3] The chapters in this book represent the diversity of liminal spaces and the transformed but enduring physical spaces and places of medieval texts: cities like Rome and Canterbury, that are and are not the locations the writers knew; archives that represent all that is now left of places long gone. The work of reproducing space and place is also a running theme, whether through performing, locating former sites, or tapping into the practices of everyday (medieval) life. The chapters foreground research that engages with fresh debates in the field, cutting-edge technological analysis (Wackett), understudied historical records (Sweetinburgh), or contemporary analogues and theoretical models (Black), in order to contribute to and expand upon our understanding of the gendered usages of and impact on space and place.

---

[2] See L. Herbert McAvoy, *Medieval Anchoritisms* (2011); *Women's Space: Patronage, Place, and Gender in the Medieval Church*, ed. V. Chieffo Raguin and S. Stanbury (2005); *A Place to Believe in: Locating Medieval Landscapes*, ed. C. A. Lees and G. R. Overing (2006); R. Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture: the Archaeology of Religious Women* (New York, 1994), and *Gender and Archaeology: Contesting the Past* (New York, 1999).

[3] D. Massey, *For Space* (2005), p. 9. See the chapters by Sweetinburgh and Collins, in this volume, for further discussion of Massey's gendered spatial theory.

Judith Butler famously wrote that 'gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*'.[4] The chapters demonstrate the variety and complexity of responses to becoming or being gendered and demonstrate how these responses are related to wider cultural frameworks of behaviours and ideals, for example rituals of devotion. Within this range, certain locational and spatial lifecycle aspects are highlighted, such as spaces for lying-in and laying to rest. Space is intimately intertwined with embodiment, as Lefebvre has argued in *The Production of Space*, showing that space and body are inspiring concepts.[5] The body that exists in relation to other bodies and other things is our primary point of engagement with not only physical space but with how we conceive of space: our sensory-motor experience and awareness of spatial dimensions informs our metaphors (as George Lakoff and Mark Johnson emphasized in *Metaphors We Live By*).[6] Gender nuances, problematizes and facilitates our questioning of place and space when exploring medieval communities, rituals and practices, journeying and networks. Questions this volume explores include: who do we look for in the places and spaces of medieval texts? – who gets to make their mark on a place? – who gets to take up space? – and how can accounts of imagined, unattainable landscapes be brought to bear on 'real' medieval places? From womb to tomb, how are we defined and confined by gender and by space?

The collection is divided into four thematic sections. The first, *Sacred Space*, explores this theme through a wide geographic and temporal scope from Ireland to southern France, and from the eleventh to the seventeenth century, while focusing on both religious and lay gendered experiences of space and place. Sheila Sweetinburgh opens the collection with her chapter on religious women in medieval Canterbury that re-examines Gilchrist's arguments on convents as marginal, isolated and vulnerable, and locates these sacred spaces in a more urban position of far greater strategic importance. Tracy Collins focuses on the archaeological evidence for late medieval Irish nunneries, and also engages with Gilchrist's arguments. Building on the research of Dianne Hall and Anne Müller, Collins emphasizes not isolation but communal rituals, practices and networks within these nunneries. Philippa Byrne, meanwhile, compares and contrasts the physically liminal character of the St. Mary de Pré leper convent, founded by St. Albans abbey, to the central role it plays in Matthew Paris's account of the abbey. Byrne explores the relationship between landscape, built environments and the constructions of gender, and investigates issues of masculine monastic governance. From Byrne's literary analysis we turn to the historical analysis of the normative in Claire Kennan's study of the place of women in late medieval parish guilds, which takes us from female enclosure to lay gendered experiences. In this chapter, Kennan offers insight into the range of lay female expressions of religious piety practised through active guild participation. Victoria Blud closes this section with her examination of the liminal and mystical space constructed by seventeenth-century exiled English nuns, predicated on their reading of medieval mysticism and evidenced by their surviving library books and manuscript writings. Exploring the idea of mystical space created through active devotional reading, it focuses on how the spatial and topographical metaphors of medieval mysticism resonate and are reimagined in the context of early modern claustration.

---

[4] J. Butler, *Gender Trouble* (London and New York, 1990), p. 140 (original emphasis).

[5] H. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. D. Nicholson-Smith (Oxford, 1991, orig. 1974).

[6] G. Lakoff and M. Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, updated edition (Chicago, Ill., 2003).

The next section, *Going Places,* focuses on gendered journeys, specifically the gendered dynamics of pilgrimage narratives, ranging from hagiographic accounts of maritime travels through penitential pilgrimages to acts of *imitatio sanctii*. Eivor Bekkhus explores the enacting of pilgrimage and punishment through the motif of being cast adrift at sea and examines the diverse range of roles that women cast adrift at sea can play within Irish pilgrimage narratives of holy men. Continuing the theme of pilgrimage and penitence, Martin Laidlaw examines how clerical celibacy and the construction of masculinity play out in relation to the figure of the Monk in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. Laidlaw surveys how clerical celibacy is portrayed by Chaucer to illustrate that the Monk, an outrider, was making the journey to Becket's shrine in penance. Einat Klafter rounds out this section with a re-examination of pilgrimage and travel in *The Book of Margery Kempe*. Klafter analyses Margery's pilgrimage and stay in Rome not as a traditional indulgence- or penitence-oriented pilgrimage, but as a homage to her role-model St. Bridget of Sweden as she maps out the saint's life in Rome instead of following the traditional

Stacions of the holy city, thus enacting a female pilgrimage route through the Eternal City.

The chapters interrogating *A Woman's Place* explore both female domesticity and lifecycles, starting with Róisín Donohoe, whose chapter examines the domestic veneration of St. Margaret of Antioch within the context of the medieval lying-in space and the fears and dangers associated with childbirth. Donohoe illustrates how women might have related to Margaret's fear and bravery when confronted by the dragon; and identified with her experiences of pain, making her a more accessible model for devotion compared to the Virgin. In this analysis, Margaret is not only a reassuring presence, she becomes a birth attendant among women in the lying-in chamber. Louise Campion investigates and compares the different modes of domesticity in *The Doctrine of the Hert* and St. Bridget's *Liber Celestis*. Campion demonstrates how both books insist on domesticity in their instructions on how to make the Christian heart a place Christ would feel at home in, countering the marginalization of the home and housekeeping activities in devotional writing. Kathryn Loveridge then examines the unnerving, disturbing side of feminine space, and how a deeply gendered concept of space and place shaped the alleged heresy of Auda Fabri in the fourteenth century, when she equated the Host with the 'filth' of the aftermath of childbirth on hearing that a woman had given birth in the street. Finally, Diane Heath looks at a woman determined to make her mark and place outside the domestic sphere, in the cathedral. Heath reads Lady Joan de Mohun's tomb in Canterbury cathedral as a detailed and specific memorialization of power, prestige and piety, uniting as it does familial ties and proximity to ecclesiastical and saintly authority, but also one that directs the onlooker's gaze towards higher concerns through the composition of the effigy itself – the female gaze, set in stone.

The chapters in the closing section, *Watch This Space,* focus on contrasting the public space of drama, the conflicted space of enclosures, and the display space of cathedral murals. They recognize the effort it took (and still takes) to lay claim to a place. Hannah Shepherd looks at women enclosed in houses and especially beguinages, for whom gendered space may be distorted by the regulation of boundaries and apertures, particularly windows and doors. Jayne Wackett, meanwhile, surveys the place of women in the murals of Kent cathedrals, in which they have been portrayed in lower or inferior positions relative to male figures, and have often been rendered all but invisible. Wackett observes that while female saints are depicted, women *qua* women are generally all but absent unless their presence is necessary for the development of the narratives of male saints. Finally, Daisy Black takes a fresh look at the interruptions of medieval mystery plays by the everyday activities of the town, examining how the performance space is also a place of 'scopic authority' – drawn not from movement or speech, but from the visibility of a character. Moreover, this authority has the potential to disrupt conventions of space and gender, offering women the opportunity to view with the same authority as men.

Place is where we are allowed to be, and not allowed to be, who we are. Knowing your place – reading the boundaries imposed by class, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, nationality, religion – does not necessarily mean accepting your place, nor staying in it. There are places that were designed for us, and those that were not, and yet we sometimes enter them regardless and thus carve out a space for ourselves. The discussions in this collection thrive on the probing of boundaries that define what constitute open and enclosed spaces, and what are the mechanisms by which people are let in, kept in, and kept out of places and spaces. While medievalists are fascinated with the mutually constructive influence of gender and space upon one another, and how individuals and communities make and are made by the places and spaces they inhabit, these are also contemporary concerns.

The need for 'safe spaces' has been declared, debated; rebuffed, renewed; the (sometimes gendered) question of how 'fields' promote or inhibit participation is undergoing renegotiation and reflection. Not only in academia but in the workplace, in politics, in technology, in traditional and social media, in popular culture, there is a renewed urgency about the ways in which we seek to define our community, our space, our place and who sets the boundaries, and the gendered experience of such space is very much part of this discussion.

This book emanates from the 2017 annual meeting of the long-running and respected academic conference series of the Gender and Medieval Studies Forum. We are grateful to the contributors, to all who presented and chaired at the conference, and to our audiences, including those who followed us on social media, chronicled for us by Debbie White and searchable under #GMSPlaces. This GMS Conference brought together speakers from a wide range of countries: Norway, Latvia, Germany, France, Spain, Italy, Ireland, Israel and the U.S.A., as well as the British Isles, and this has provided for the volume's truly international outlook. We would also like to acknowledge and thank the conference hosts at the Centre for Kent History and Heritage at Canterbury Christ Church University, the staff at the archives and library of Canterbury cathedral, the Gender and Medieval Studies steering committee, Julie Spraggon at the Institute of Historical Research and Kerry Whitston and Emily Morrell at the School of Advanced Study publications team. Finally, we acknowledge and await the work still to come.

I. Sacred space

Detail of St Lawrence Church, Canterbury, the only remnant of the medieval hospital to survive into the early modern period. C.C.A.L. Map 49, late sixteenth century.

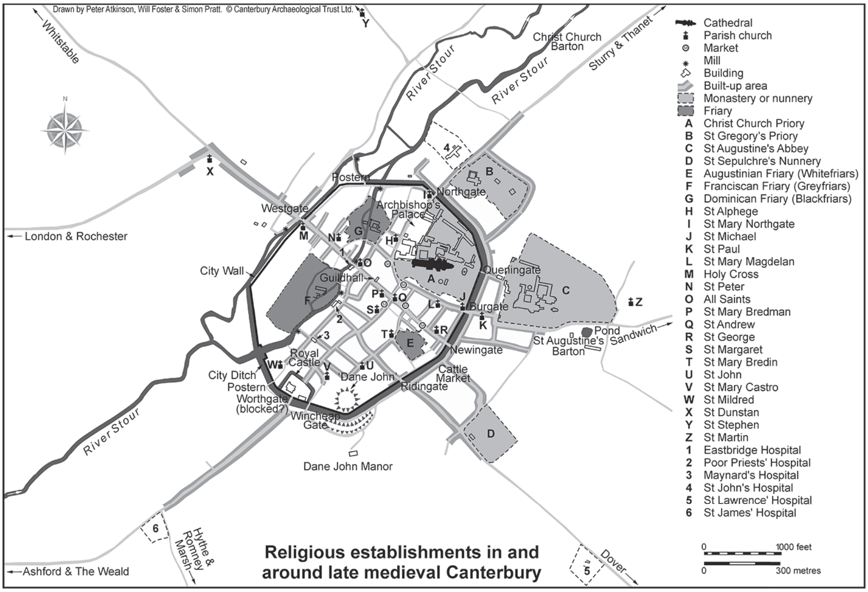

Drawn by Peter Atkinson, Will Foster & Simon Pratt. © Canterbury Archaeological Trust Ltd.
Religious establishments in and around late medieval Canterbury
Cathedral
Parish church
Market
Mill
Building
Built-up area
Monastery or nunnery
Friary
A Christ Church Priory
B St Gregory's Priory
C St Augustine's Abbey
D St Sepulchre's Nunnery
E Augustinian Friary (Whitefriars)
F Franciscan Friary (Greyfriars)
G Dominican Friary (Blackfriars)
H St Alphege
I St Mary Northgate
J St Michael
K St Paul
L St Mary Magdelan
M Holy Cross
N St Peter
O All Saints
P St Mary Bredman
Q St Andrew
R St George
S St Margaret
T St Mary Bredin
U St John
V St Mary Castro
W St Mildred
X St Dunstan
Y St Stephen
Z St Martin
1 Eastbridge Hospital
2 Poor Priests' Hospital
3 Maynard's Hospital
4 St John's Hospital
5 St Lawrence' Hospital
6 St James' Hospital
0 1000 feet
0 300 metres
N
Whitstable
London & Rochester
Ashford & The Weald
Hythe & Romney Marsh
Dover
Sandwich
Sturry & Thanet
River Stour
River Stour
River Stour
Christ Church Barton
Postern
Northgate
Westgate
Archbishop's Palace
City Wall
Guildhall
Queningate
Burgate
Newingate
Cattle Market
Ridingate
Dane John
Dane John Manor
Royal Castle
City Ditch
Postern
Worthgate (blocked?)
Wincheap Gate
St Augustine's Barton
Pond

Figure 1.1. Map of religious establishments in and around late medieval Canterbury.

1. Religious women in the landscape: their roles in medieval Canterbury and its hinterland*

Sheila Sweetinburgh

In her seminal work *Gender and Material Culture: the Archaeology of Religious Women*, Roberta Gilchrist devoted a chapter to nunneries in the medieval landscape, where she proposed a number of ideas regarding what she saw as the gender implications for the place of religious women as opposed to religious men in the landscape.[1] In her chapter, she first considered the place of the institution itself, and its site in the landscape, before examining the estates of these nunneries, using examples drawn from across England. Such an approach has considerable merit regarding a broad understanding of the place of religious women, but by investigating the particularity of three houses in close proximity, it is feasible to offer a more nuanced analysis of the relationship between religious women and their landscape, and to assess the level of continuity and change over time. For in gender terms, place and space, have generated considerable theoretical debates among feminists and time, too, is increasingly seen as a gendered concept.[2]

Gilchrist's assessment that 'people invest their physical territory with social and symbolic meanings particular to the values of their own society' is a valuable starting point, although it is worthwhile stressing the temporality of this statement in addition to matters of space regarding 'their *own* society' (emphasis added).[3] Hence when thinking about the site, the meanings for both those inside and outside the religious house are likely to

---

* The author would like to thank Simon Pratt (Canterbury Archaeological Trust) for preparing the map showing Canterbury's religious houses.

[1] R. Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture: the Archaeology of Religious Women* (New York, 1994), pp. 63–91.

[2] Three of the foremost theorists on gender and place and space are still Judith Butler, bell hooks and Doreen Massey; see M. Mahtani, 'Judith Butler', K. McKittrick, 'bell hooks' and F. Callard, 'Doreen Massey', in *Key Thinkers on Space and Place*, ed. P. Hubbard, R. Kitchin and G. Valentine (2004), pp. 189–94, 65–71, 219–25. For work on gender and time, see V. Bryson, *Gender and the Politics of Time: Feminist Theory and Contemporary Debates* (Bristol, 2007).

[3] Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture*, p. 63.

S. Sweetinburgh, 'Religious women in the landscape: their roles in medieval Canterbury and its hinterland', in *Gender in medieval places, spaces and thresholds*, ed. V. Blud, D. Heath and E. Klafter (2018), pp. 9–24.

have altered over time depending on local, as well as regional and national, circumstances and, equally, this might have been true for different houses, even in what appears at first glance to be a similar landscape. Among her principal conclusions, Gilchrist views separation as characterizing the location of medieval nunneries, urban houses sited on the outer limits of settlement, which meant beyond any town walls and just beyond the urban fringe, perhaps on the other side of a river or in the least populated parish or in open fields. Thus, unlike certain male houses, nunneries were not found in conjunction with castles, and Gilchrist sees their position at least superficially as indicative of vulnerability, rather than denoting dominance.[4] Rural nunneries were even more isolated topographically and, as she describes it,

> were liminal places – located at the physical and psychological margins of society, their place in the wilderness keeping them away from towns, castles, and possibly even more importantly, male religious houses, and instead often at the outer margins of villages.[5]

Nonetheless, such isolation might paradoxically offer security, in addition to providing the opportunity to cultivate a more ascetic spiritual existence, albeit this desire was presumably far more in keeping with Cistercian rather than Benedictine ideals.

To a degree the sense of liminality discussed by Gilchrist was not confined to nunneries, and it has been linked to ideas concerning leper hospitals. Recent scholarship has stressed separation rather than isolation, noting that leper houses were often close to main roads, albeit they were frequently suburban institutions.[6] Moreover, many had urban connections through their role as recipients of sub-standard produce from local markets or their place as beggars in urban parish churchyards.[7] As noted above, this positioning is helpful in general terms, yet when close attention is given to specific houses it may mask more than it reveals, which demonstrates the value of case study analysis. In addition, how far if at all these religious women had an active role in the location of 'their' house is generally not known and was probably often severely limited.[8] Yet, even if the cause of their placement in the landscape had been in the hands of others, the effect of that positioning might allow them to engage proactively as well as reactively, and thereby provided opportunities for female agency on behalf of their house and its sisters.[9]

---

[4] Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture*, pp. 63–5.

[5] Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture*, pp. 65–9.

[6] A. E. M. Satchell, 'The emergence of leper-houses in medieval England' (unpublished University of Oxford D.Phil. thesis, 1998), pp. 22–39; among her many works on this topic: C. Rawcliffe, *Leprosy in Medieval England* (Woodbridge, 2006), pp. 307–12; S. Sweetinburgh, *The Role of the Hospital in Medieval England: Gift-giving and the Spiritual Economy* (Dublin, 2004), pp. 79–81.

[7] Rawcliffe, *Leprosy in Medieval England*, pp. 313–15. For a Kent example of this link between lepers, begging and churchyards, see St. Anthony's hospital near the causeway leading out of Sandwich and the note that the lepers were allowed to beg in the churchyard of St. Mary's parish church (Kent History and Library Centre, PRC 17/6, fo. 70).

Gilchrist explored the site of the religious house separately from its estates; this chapter maintains this differentiation. However, rather than an examination of this relationship in terms of agrarian production, this chapter investigates the presence of the female religious in their landscape during the establishment and early history of their site and consolidation of their estates; and the survival of their site and estates in the later middle ages. The three female religious houses that are the focus of this study comprise a nunnery and two leper hospitals which were close to the metropolitan city of Canterbury, although their landholdings extended across east Kent. Even though the surviving documentary sources vary regarding quantity and quality among the three institutions, and archaeological excavations have only occurred on part of the site of the best documented house, together they comprise useful contrasts and comparisons, from their foundation in the eleventh and twelfth centuries to their position in the late middle ages. Thus, individually and collectively they provide a long history regarding the place of the female religious house and its holdings in Canterbury and its hinterland that offer findings that may be more widely applicable in medieval England.

Early history – establishment and consolidation

Looking first at the foundations of these three houses and the immediate aftermath, there is a marked contrast in terms of the level of female involvement from the greatest at Holy Sepulchre's nunnery to the least at St. Lawrence's hospital. Domesday records that four nuns had established their presence close to the city of Canterbury, holding four acres of land from St. Augustine's abbey.[10] Even though the exact location is not stated, when Archbishop Anselm came to regularize the community of nuns there soon after, he was establishing a religious house under archiepiscopal patronage within the great abbey's territory when there was considerable friction between these two great ecclesiastical lords.[11] Whether the nuns had sought the archbishop's aid is unclear, but the location of their house dedicated to the Holy Sepulchre on the abbey's land offered them, as well as the archbishop, a valuable foothold that would have been difficult to ignore in the competition for jurisdiction and control over territory in the suburbs of early post-Conquest Canterbury. For not only was the land on which the church of Holy Sepulchre sat held by the abbey, but it had ancient parochial responsibilities that placed it under the patronage of the archbishop of Canterbury.[12]

---

[8] Yet this was also the case concerning the foundation of male religious houses. Founders of both sexes saw the political advantages of particular sites from their own perspectives: J. Burton, '*Fundator Noster*: Roger de Mowbray as founder and patron of monasteries', in *Religious and Laity in Western Europe 1000–1400: Interaction, Negotiation, and Power*, ed. E. Jamroziak and J. Burton (Turnhout, 2006), pp. 23–40; A. Mathers-Lawrence, 'The Augustinian canons in Northumbria: region, tradition, and textuality in a colonizing order', in *The Regular Canons in the Medieval British Isles*, ed. J. Burton and K. Stöber (Turnhout, 2011), pp. 59–66.

[9] As at Clementhorpe priory, where the nuns successfully appealed to the pope against their founder's successor Archbishop Geoffrey; S. Thompson, *Women Religious: the Founding of English Nunneries after the Norman Conquest* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 194–5.

Furthermore, the nunnery's position was, as John Speed showed, on the Dover road to the south-east of Canterbury 'about 270 paces from the city gate: just beyond the urban fringe'.[13] As noted, this spot was strategically valuable to the nuns, their patron the archbishop and the neighbouring great monastic house of St. Augustine's abbey, but also to the local civic authorities. First, the nunnery not only abutted the main road to Dover but was on a corner plot, its northern boundary being a track, later a street, which marked the border between the lands of St. Augustine's abbey's home manor of Longport and the liberty of Canterbury city.[14] Second, William de Cauvel, the city's portreeve, was a major benefactor, perhaps even a joint founder with his friend Anselm, because his obit continued to be remembered, the *Valor* recording the dispensing of alms annually to mark the death of the nunnery's founder.[15] Thirdly, for the civic authorities this corner plot of the nunnery mattered because the Dover road was under the king's jurisdiction and, as a royal town, the civic officers would be responsible to the king's reeve.[16] Moreover, the track way and the lands to the north towards Canterbury were within the city's liberty.[17] Also close by was a market and, notwithstanding little is known about its function, it is feasible that it is the one Anselm had castigated Cauvel for moving.[18] Thus, although disputes over territorial jurisdiction were common in medieval towns and Canterbury was no exception, the presence of these Benedictine nuns under archiepiscopal patronage at this boundary location was of considerable importance to all parties.

---

[10] *Domesday Book: Kent*, ed. P. Morgan (Chichester, 1983), vii. 11.

[11] Thompson believes the evidence may indicate that the nunnery formed from a community of anchoresses; Thompson, *Women Religious*, p. 36.

[12] *William Thorne's Chronicle of Saint Augustine's Abbey Canterbury*, ed. A. H. Davis (Oxford, 1934), p. 215.

[13] See Early English Books Online for J. Speed, *The Theatre of the Empire of Great Britaine* (1612), book 1, p. 7 <http://eebo.chadwyck.com.chain> [accessed 22 Oct. 2017]; Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture*, p. 64.

[14] T. Tatton-Brown, 'The abbey precinct, liberty and estate', in *St. Augustine's Abbey Canterbury*, ed. R. Gem (1997), p. 134.

[15] W. Urry, *Canterbury under the Angevin Kings* (1967), pp. 62–3; A. Williams, 'The Anglo-Norman abbey', in Gem, *St. Augustine's Abbey*, p. 61.

Turning next to St. James's hospital, although there is nothing to indicate that the female religious were as involved as their counterparts at Holy Sepulchre's in the location of their house, the prioress and her sisters were possibly implicated in matters of patronage that were important from a strategic perspective. Even though many of the thirteenth-century charters of St. James's hospital refer to brothers as well as the sisters, the early documentary sources only mention the sisters, and the house seems to have been a female religious establishment for much of its history.[19] This hospital was also on a boundary, although not one that involved St. Augustine's abbey. Instead, St. James's abutted another major road out of Canterbury that was again a royal highway and the site of two markets, but, just as significantly, the hospital was located adjacent to the suburb known as Wincheap on land just outside the city's liberty next to an ancient hollow lane and later the site of the city gallows.[20] This, too, can be envisaged as a liminal space in Gilchrist's terms, but it seems likely its strategic value was recognized by the prioress and sisters, Christ Church priory, the archbishop and the civic authorities.[21] The early history of the hospital is unclear but it seems to have been established by a member of a lesser noble family who had links to the archbishop's household by the mid twelfth century, but from about 1200 it was placed under the patronage of Christ Church priory.[22]

---

[16] According to Domesday, the straight roads inside and outside the city were the king's and anyone doing 'wrong' there was subject to a fine to be collected by the king's reeve (*Domesday*, C: 6).

[17] This map is much later, but it does illustrate the boundary of the liberty of the city at this point; C.C.A.L., Map 123.

[18] C.C.A.L., Lit. MS. C.20, pp. 58–59; Urry, *Canterbury under the Angevin Kings*, p. 62.

[19] British Library, Additional MS. 32098, fos. 3vff.

[20] C.C.A.L., CC/FA 12, fo. 75.

[21] S. Sweetinburgh, 'Caught in the cross-fire: patronage and institutional politics in late twelfth-century Canterbury', in *Cathedrals, Communities and Conflict in the Anglo-Norman World*, ed. P. Dalton, C. Insley and L. Wilkinson (Woodbridge, 2011), pp. 187–202. Rawcliffe, too, discusses liminal sites, but does not see boundaries as the norm for their location; Rawcliffe, *Leprosy in Medieval England*, pp. 258–9, 307–15.

[22] Godefrid de Malling's daughter confirmed her parents' gifts in the late 12th century,

Questions surrounding this transference of patronage provide an example of what Patrick Geary has called remembering while forgetting, which might be said to have led to the production of narratives that place a different emphasis on the role of the women at St. James's hospital due to the exclusion of certain documents.[23] According to the 'narrative' compiled from copies of petitions and letters in one of the priory's registers, by the early 1160s the hospital had fallen into a disordered and corrupt state where healthy women had sought to oust the leprous. Consequently, Pope Alexander III called on the prior at Christ Church to remedy the situation, a move supported by Henry II. Several decades later and following further financial mismanagement, prior Geoffrey II re-established the hospital, placing its assets under his control.[24] Yet this would seem to conceal important events involving the hospital that offer a more complex narrative where the sisters at St. James's were far less culpable, indeed could be seen as victims, and where their very passivity gave them female agency to secure a potentially powerful patron in the form of Christ Church priory. Using chronicles, copies of letters and petitions, and hagiography, much of it linked directly to the priory, this narrative shows that St. James's became embroiled in the controversy during the 1180s between the priory and Archbishop Baldwin concerning his proposed new house of canons to the north of Canterbury. The details of this international dispute are not necessary here, but among the violent acts undertaken by the archbishop's supporters was an assault on the leprous women and their possessions in 1188 when Robert de Bechetune and his followers were said to have driven off the hospital's cattle and sheep.[25] Such an attack seemingly cast the sisters as no more than helpless victims. Nevertheless, the leper engaged in his/her religious vocation might have been perceived as Christ in disguise, because lepers' earthly suffering was thought to make them spiritually superior. As a result, the sisters could be viewed as patient sufferers with Christ and his martyr saints, many of whom were women, who would eventually triumph against the 'wicked' archiepiscopal party. For the sisters, this triumph may have rested on procuring protection through the auspices of the hospital's master, a local physician who was especially active on the priory's behalf during the dispute. After he initially sought papal protection, Master Feramin thereafter looked to the priory to protect St. James's hospital, and the prior agreed to act as guardian and

---

and she is known to have held lands in her own right in 1166; Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 32098, fo. 1; Urry, *Canterbury under the Angevin Kings*, pp. 53–4.

[23] P. Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance: Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millennium* (Princeton, N.J., 1994), pp. 7–8.

[24] C.C.A.L., DCc/Register B, fos. 426–26v.

[25] *The Historical Works of Gervase of Canterbury,* ed. W. Stubbs (2 vols., 1879–80), i. 427.

overseer, which involved the appointment of the three priests there and the twenty-five leprous women.[26]

Whether subsequently this protection brought in extra grants to the hospital is unknown, but the chance to exchange the patronage of a lesser noble family that was strongly connected to the archbishop for a powerful, local male religious house presumably looked highly desirable for both benefactors and beneficiaries. For the priory, too, St. James's location outside the city's liberty, although its home farm straddled the boundary, was highly desirable by association because it abutted the important commercial suburb of Wincheap, on the road to Battle abbey's manor and town of Wye along the Stour river valley, and it was the area with the most diverse forms of landholding. As well as the king, others who held land in this suburb included the priory, to a far lesser extent St. Augustine's abbey, certain Canterbury citizens and the hospital.[27] Moreover, this seeming jumble of holdings was not totally settled in the twelfth century, which meant that by acquiring the patronage of the hospital, the prior was able to enhance significantly his position and power in the area, a reciprocal arrangement that benefited hospital and priory.

Unlike the foundation of Holy Sepulchre's nunnery or the early history of St. James's hospital, female agency at St. Lawrence's hospital was probably absent concerning issues of location and patronage. The hospital community established by Abbot Hugh of St. Augustine's in 1137 on abbey land comprised twelve brothers and sisters with a clerk and chaplain and it was sited abutting the Dover road but on the other side to the nunnery.[28] Like Holy Sepulchre's nunnery it was surrounded by a precinct wall and in the same way the wall formed a boundary between the lands under the abbey's and the city's jurisdiction, as well as the king's highway. Even though strategically such a position may relate to the abbey's desire to establish in stone tangible markers in the landscape, as residents at its daughter house the prioress and sisters may have been aware of the thirteenth-century territorial dispute between the civic authorities and the abbey.[29]

Once established in the landscape (see Figure 1.1), like their male counterparts, female religious houses benefited from gifts of land, houses and other assets which provided them with a presence that extended beyond their precinct boundary. How far and in what ways varied considerably among individual houses, but for those established on suburban sites, their estates often comprised three areas: the house's immediate neighbourhood, inside and outside the town and further afield. Furthermore, the identity and more especially the longevity of association, coupled with level of interest of patrons and benefactors – lay and ecclesiastical – towards 'their' religious house varied similarly. Yet, although none of the female houses in England developed estates comparable to the great, ancient Benedictine male houses, even modest houses such as these Canterbury institutions demonstrate ideas about presence and agency in the landscape.

---

[26] Sweetinburgh, 'Caught in the cross-fire', pp. 199–202.

[27] Urry, *Canterbury under the Angevin Kings*, pp. 276–80.

[28] *Thorne's Chronicle*, pp. 85–86; C.C.A.L., Lit. MS. C.20, pp. 9–10.

[29] *Thorne's Chronicle*, pp. 250–52; C.C.A.L., Lit. MS. E.19, fo. 58v.

The fragmentary nature of the surviving cartularies for the nunnery and St. James's hospital means that a disproportionate part of the assessment relies on St. Lawrence's hospital registers.[30] Nonetheless, it is clear that all three institutions held land in the vicinity of their precincts, but only for St. Lawrence's is it possible to ascertain the different relationships between benefactor and beneficiary. For even though the acquisition of these neighbouring holdings was seemingly understood as conforming to the language of charity, such grants differed and ranged from gifts in free and perpetual alms to those resembling a sale.[31] Furthermore, some grantors were prepared to use these different forms in their relationship with St. Lawrence's. In 1264, Thomas de Bery made his first grant of two shillings of free rent in pure alms to maintain a light at the high altar in the hospital's chapel and to secure a priest there to celebrate mass for Thomas's soul and those of his ancestors.[32] Seven years later he made two further grants, one with the consent of his wife – which suggests the land was hers – of an acre near to the hospital's mill, and 3*s* 7*d* of rent from various lands nearby. In each instance he expected to receive a fee from the hospital.[33] Who was responsible for this impetus is unknown, yet it is conceivable that the hospital authorities may have been instrumental because they were prepared to pay over £7 in order to strengthen their position in the locality.

All three of these Canterbury religious houses held modest portfolios of land, property and rents within the city's liberty which extended beyond the town wall.[34] These ranged from central plots such as the St. James holding adjacent to the guildhall, St. Lawrence's 6*s* 8*d* in rent from a tenement in the Mercery, and Holy Sepulchre's comparable rent of 21*s* from three messuages, to St. Lawrence's tenement in the peripheral parish of St. Mary Northgate for which the hospital was to pay to the sacrist at St. Augustine's abbey and the grantor's heirs a total of 4*d* annually.[35] Certain benefactors, including a few women such as Susan de Planaz, were leading townspeople, yet why they supported these female religious houses is not clear, although John Turte in his grant referred to his sister Muriel, who was a sister at St. Lawrence's.[36]

---

[30] However, an idea of the grants the nunnery had received by the mid 13th century is possible; *Calendar Charter Rolls, Henry III 1226–1257* (1903), 318–20.

[31] S. Sweetinburgh, 'Supporting the Canterbury hospitals: benefaction and the language of charity in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries', *Archaeol. Cant.,* cxxii (2002), 237–55.

[32] C.C.A.L., Lit. MS. C.20, p. 51.

[33] C.C.A.L., Lit. MS. C.20, pp. 49–51.

[34] C.C.A.L., CC/FA 1, fo. 310.

Similar factors such as personal connections, spiritual efficacy and a known willingness of the religious house to acquire holdings and other assets, may have been significant regarding the relationships these institutions developed with donors in other areas of east Kent. For the nunnery and St. James's hospital their more distant estates also seem to have been a consequence of certain high-status benefactors. Henry II granted the rectory of Bredgar to St. James's hospital and Holy Sepulchre's nunnery numbered Hubert de Burgh among its donors.[37] Moreover, as well as the status of the original donor, bonds of lordship appear to have influenced subordinates to follow suit in these areas. For example, the nunnery received subsequent gifts of land in Romney Marsh from William de Sylonesbregge.[38] The relationship between St. James's hospital and those at Bredgar seems to have drawn on all these factors, but there is little to indicate that this extended to any link to the parish church. Rather the hospital's presence in the Bredgar landscape seems to have been predominantly as landlord. Yet in its role as the acquirer of holdings, often from several members of the same family, including a few women, it was potentially supporting such individuals through the initial payment and thereafter an annual rent to the grantor and then to his or her heirs.[39] Nonetheless, distance from the religious house may have countered such ties, especially over succeeding generations; the hospital's presence in Bredgar was as limited as the nunnery's in Romney Marsh and, although closer, probably St. Lawrence's in its most distant holdings at Chislet.[40]

Late middle ages – survival

Turning to the later period, evidence of the roles female religious undertook in their landscape again relates to the location of their house and their estates. For the former, this is especially pertinent regarding St. Lawrence's hospital which, in the early fifteenth century, was drawn into the dispute between abbey and city. An altercation at the hospital in 1436 between the city dignitaries and several monks was reported to have taken place during the annual civic procession to St. Lawrence's on the patronal feast day. According to the city authorities, this was an ancient annual ritual that denoted the hospital's location in St. Paul's parish and within the liberty of Canterbury, thereby challenging the spatial relationship between the abbey and hospital.[41] Whether this was the first occasion such ideas had been raised is not known, but the stress on the antiquity of the custom would suggest that the civic authorities were keen to authenticate their stance vis-à-vis the hospital's place in the landscape at a time when they were seeking to intensify their opposition to the abbey's long-running territorial claims. For the prioress and her sisters, the violence that took place when the civic procession arrived at the hospital's gate must have been an uncomfortable reminder of their strategic boundary position, and may have been part of the catalyst for the production of three similar but not identical registers.[42]

---

[35] K.H.L.C., EK/U270/Q5; C.C.A.L., Lit. MS. C.20, pp. 75–6, 93–4; *Cal. Chart. Rolls*, 319.

[36] *Cal. Chart. Rolls*, 319; C.C.A.L., Lit. MS. C.20, p. 76.

[37] Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 32098, fo. 1v; Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 5516, fo. 9.

[38] Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 5516, fos 9–9v, 10v–11.

[39] Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 32098, fo. 3vff.

[40] Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 5516, fos 9–12v; C.C.A.L. Lit. MS. C.20, pp. 105–9.

It is likely that two of these, the first and the third, belonged to the community at the hospital, the other to St. Augustine's abbey. The arrangement of the materials in the hospital's two versions demonstrate greater similarity and apparently provide a narrative concerning the hospital's place in society, thereby potentially re-establishing St. Lawrence's in the physical and spiritual landscape of fifteenth-century Canterbury.[43] Looking particularly at spatial dynamics, the compiler seems to have employed a deliberate strategy to stress the house's identity in terms of its early history, to demonstrate the level of protection it enjoyed, highlight ideas concerning the continuity of its good governance and illustrate its place in Canterbury and east Kent. For example, the first section of these two registers provides an account of the hospital's establishment: the name of its eminent founder; the connection to the abbey; the composition of the house's initial community; the identity of its papal protectors; and the type and level of endowment provided to sustain this community.[44] Such precision not only offered historical accuracy almost three hundred years after the hospital's foundation, but might also be said to have at the very least superimposed a veneer of authority and authenticity. Theirs was an ancient and worthy religious house that had withstood the problems of human frailty, including the 'greed' of the civic authorities, who had tried to commandeer the place, for God was on the side of the women of St. Lawrence.

---

[41] T.N.A., KB 27/706, rex rot. 29.

[42] S. Sweetinburgh, 'Placing the hospital: the production of St. Lawrence's hospital registers in fifteenth-century Canterbury', in *The Fifteenth Century, XIII. Exploring the Evidence: Commemoration, Administration and the Economy*, ed. L. Clark (Woodbridge, 2014), pp. 110, 113–16.

[43] Sweetinburgh, 'Placing the hospital', pp. 118–21.

[44] C.C.A.L., Lit. MS. C.20, pp. 9, 34; Bodleian Library, MS. Top. Kent. D.3, fos. 5, 17. See also *Thorne's Chronicle*, pp. 84–6.

Yet this was not always the case, and although the female religious at St. Lawrence's were not subject to archiepiscopal visitations, because like their mother house they were exempt, the prioress and sisters were answerable to the abbot, as well as having his deputy as the hospital's *custos* or master. However, notwithstanding the hospital registers do not mention such visitations, the listing in the hospital's registers of new regulations by Abbot Findon in 1294 and certain revisions by Abbot Colewell in 1356 point to their active oversight. Possibly the senior monks at St. Augustine's realized that the imposition of these later ordinances in particular was best implemented through a spirit of collaboration, perhaps including the annual reading of these rules in English for the benefit of the whole community.[45]

As subject to archiepiscopal visitations, the female religious at Holy Sepulchre's nunnery and St. James's hospital, might have been seen and seen themselves as possessors of a more public ecclesiastical persona than their counterparts at St. Lawrence's. For example, the prioress at St. James's complained to the visitor in 1511 that the hospital's precincts were violated by the misconduct of Richard Welles and his wife who were selling ale there.[46] She also reported that Christ Church priory was not providing bread and wood as it was expected to do and, in the same year, the prioress at Holy Sepulchre's complained about the great noise around the priory church, which was presumably due to the activities of local parishioners, not the nuns.[47] However, such visitations might bring to light evidence of dissent or irregularities, such as the report, in 1368, of suspect persons at night in the chamber shared by Margery Chyld and Juliana Aldelose at the nunnery.[48] Nonetheless, as Janet Burton has shown, such reports may sometimes reflect certain archiepiscopal expectations which were at odds with those of the community rather than serious problems.[49] For the prioress and sisters at St. James's such differing views may have been most acute during *sede vacante* visitations when the prior from Christ Church was the visitor. The subsequent issue of revised regulations in the early fifteenth century might imply a loss of female agency in the conduct of the life of the hospital, but conversely may indicate that previously the hospital sisters had, for example, seen themselves as independent of any religious order and had undertaken far more active roles in the celebration of the mass in the hospital's chapel than were deemed appropriate by the monastic authorities.[50]

---

[45] C.C.A.L., Lit. MS. C.20, pp. 1–8, 22–7; Bodl., Top. Kent. D.3, fos., 1–5, 11–13v.

[46] *Kentish Visitations of Archbishop William Warham and his deputies, 1511–12*, ed. K. L. Wood-Legh (Maidstone, 1984), p. 12.

[47] *Visitations of Warham*, 11, 12.

[48] *Acta Stephani Langton, Cantuariensis Archiepiscopi, A.D. 1207–1228*, ed. K. Major (Oxford, 1950), pp. 231–2.

[49] J. Burton, 'Cloistered women and male authority: power and authority in Yorkshire nunneries in the later middle ages', in *Thirteenth-Century England X*, ed. M. Prestwich, R. Britnell and R. Frame (Woodbridge, 2005), pp. 157, 163.

Whereas visitations might be viewed as mainly offering mechanisms for the female religious to be reactive as they responded to the injunctions imposed by higher male clerical authority, and at best a place where the prioress and her sisters might negotiate their status and conduct, some prioresses were prepared to be proactive in the city courts. Indeed, some were prepared to attend hearings in person rather than acting through their attorney as either plaintiffs or defendants. Even though the number of cases involving these three houses is very small in the surviving fifteenth-century Canterbury petty sessions, especially for St. James's and St. Lawrence's, at Holy Sepulchre's nunnery Dame Johanna Whetefelde had been involved in several cases at the beginning of the century, and from the 1470s throughout her time as prioress, Dame Mildred Hale was even more active in the courts.[51] For Holy Sepulchre's, her attendance in the city's guildhall meant that the prioress extended the nunnery's presence well beyond its precinct, although there is nothing to suggest testators were drawn to support the house as a result.

Only four per cent of Canterbury's male testators left anything to the nunnery and of the far fewer female testators this fell to three per cent.[52] These townsmen were even less likely to bequeath anything to either hospital, but women were as prepared to aid St. James's as they were the nunnery. Yet this did not extend to St. Lawrence's, which was apparently ignored by all bar a tiny number of testators. In part, this may reflect the greater distance of the hospitals from the city centre compared to the nunnery because the catchment area of its benefactors did extend across the city whereas those for the hospitals were predominantly from Canterbury's southern and eastern parishes. Nevertheless, it is likely that other factors were significant such as the parochial role of Holy Sepulchre's church, including the presence of a fraternity dedicated to Our Lady, as well as personal and familial links between those inside and outside the nunnery.[53] For example, John Hale senior (1517) sought burial at the nunnery wherever the prioress would allow, associated prayers for his soul and a lamp to burn before the image of Our Lady in the nave; while John Colman (1535) bequeathed a featherbed, bolster and quilt to Alice Colman, a nun there.[54] Yet why St. Lawrence's hospital chapel did not benefit in the same way is not clear because it also seems to have had some form of parochial status. The only lay testator known to have sought burial in the churchyard there was Thomas Trendham and he similarly supported the chapel, leaving 6s 8d towards repairs.[55] However, kinship and personal ties may explain certain bequests at both hospitals: John Nasshe's sister had previously resided at St. Lawrence's, while Sir Thomas Bekke, chaplain, wished to be remembered by Mistress Elizabeth, the prioress at St. James's and perhaps his patron.[56] Yet it seems only at the nunnery did the prioress sponsor a succession of minor clerics through holy orders.[57]

---

[50] J. Duncombe and N. Battely, *The History and Antiquities of the Three Archiepiscopal Hospitals. At or near Canterbury viz St. Nicholas at Harbledown, St. John, Northgate and St. Thomas of Eastbridge, with some Account of the Priory of St. Gregory, the Nunnery of St. Sepulchre, the Hospitals of St. James and St. Lawrence and Maynard's Spittle* (1785), pp. 431–4.

[51] C.C.A.L., CC-J/B/215, fos. 3, 3v, 4v, 14; CC-J/B/276, fo. 61v; CC-J/B/282, fos. 6, 42v; CC-J/B/287, fo. 48; CC-J/B/289, fo. 38; CC-J/B/298, fos. 43, 66v; CC-J/B/302, fos. 1, 1v.

[52] The total number of surviving wills for the city and the closest parishes beyond the liberty up to 1540 is 1130.

Interestingly, the nunnery's role as the patron of the city parish of St. Mary Bredin does not seem to have attracted testamentary bequests to Holy Sepulchre's.[58] Even though this was partly a reflection of the small number of surviving wills from this parish, it may also indicate that parishioners had little interest in the nunnery, preferring instead to focus their bequests on the parish church and its clergy.[59] Indeed, one of the very few from the parish who supported Holy Sepulchre's was Robert Flete the vicar (1486), who remembered this relationship through his gift of 3s 4d to his patroness.[60] This type of relationship was not available to the prioress at either hospital in terms of clerics seeking preferment locally, but St. James's continued to hold the advowson of the church at Bredgar.[61] Yet nothing in the wills made by parishioners from Bredgar indicates any spiritual interest in the hospital.

---

[53] Among his bequests to St. Sepulchre's church, William Hempstede (1499) left 8*d* to the high altar and 4*d* to the fraternity of Our Lady; K.H.L.C., PRC 17/7, fo. 144.

[54] K.H.L.C., PRC 17/13, fo. 106; PRC 32/15, fo. 321.

[55] K.H.L.C., PRC 17/2, fo. 338.

[56] K.H.L.C., PRC 32/3, fo. 93; PRC 17/14, fo. 270.

[57] This is shown most clearly in Archbishop Pecham's registers, see *The Register of John Pecham, Archbishop of Canterbury, 1279–1292*, ed. F. N. Davis and D. Douie (2 vols., 1968–9), i. 190, 191, 196, 200, 204, 205, 211, 220, 229, 240; ii. 34.

[58] *Registrum Thome Bourgchier Cantuariensis Archiepiscopi, A.D. 1454–1486,* ed. F. R. H. Du Boulay (Oxford, 1957), pp. 237, 256, 258, 344.

[59] Only 16 wills survive from parishioners made prior to 1540.

[60] K.H.L.C., PRC 17/4, fo. 139.

[61] *The Register of Henry Chichele, Archbishop of Canterbury, 1414–43*, ed. E. F. Jacob (4 vols., Oxford, 1937–47), i. 143, 263, 276, 296, 311, 337; *Registrum Bourgchier*, 319.

The vicar, Sir John Laundy (1508), seemingly agreed with his parishioners; however the will of Sir John Mone, one of his predecessors, does include a bequest of 6d to each of the hospitals between Canterbury and Gravesend, but whether this included St. James's is not clear.[62] St. Lawrence's, too, had interests in at least two parish churches outside Canterbury, receiving some of the tithes from Chislet and Stodmarsh, but in neither case does this seem to have generated testamentary bequests to the hospital from local parishioners.[63] Notwithstanding the lack of a direct link, the master's defence on several occasions of the hospital's rights to these tithes, while valuable for the sisters, may not have endeared them to the parishioners.[64]

This hierarchical relationship between the prioress and sisters and their parishioners was not confined to tithe and, as landlords, the female religious houses all had tenants on their estates. Moreover, this presence in the landscape seems to have extended to their role as tax payers of murage locally in Canterbury. Such activities are illustrated in the extant rentals, accounts and murage book, for as well as collecting rents and paying taxes, the authorities at these three houses were buyers and sellers of produce and other items.[65] However, the degree to which the prioresses were directly involved in these transactions is difficult to gauge.

In conclusion, it is hardly surprising that ideas about separation, liminality and especially vulnerability are discussed among historians when considering the place of religious women in the medieval landscape, particularly in relation to the small, poorly endowed communities of Cistercian sisters in Yorkshire. And while not completely rejecting this analysis, this chapter suggests, as Burton has done, that a broader picture can be fruitfully explored using case studies.[66] These reveal that the presence of religious women in the landscape did not solely denote weakness. Indeed, at times their activities can be characterized as involving negotiation, exchange and reciprocity, implying the value some of these women placed on female agency. Furthermore, even where the founders and patrons of female religious houses were male, the female residents themselves on occasion took part in public life, as witnessed by their appearances in the civic courts. Finally, these Canterbury houses, and especially St. Lawrence's hospital, highlight the value of the written word to construct an institutional identity that set these religious women in the religious and secular life of the city and east Kent, a position they had occupied for centuries and which they continued to hold until well into the sixteenth century.

---

[62] Sir John Mone; K.H.L.C., PRC 17/2, fo. 309; Sir John Laundy; PRC, 17/9, fo. 296.

[63] None of the 96 Chislet testators bequeathed anything to St. Lawrence's hospital, although three men did remember St. John's hospital in the city; K.H.L.C, PRC 17/3, fo. 282; PRC 17/3, fo. 431; PRC 32/3, fo. 252.

[64] C.C.A.L., Lit. MS. C.20, pp. 31–33.

[65] C.C.A.L., Lit. MS. C.20, pp. 77–79; Bodl. Top. Kent. D.3, fo. 25v. K.H.L.C., EK/U270/Q5. C.C.A.L., CC-BAD/1.

[66] Burton, 'Cloistered women', pp. 157–65.

2. Space and place: archaeologies of female monasticism in later medieval Ireland

Tracy Collins

Space and place play a particularly important role in the archaeological study of medieval female monasticism, perhaps to a greater degree than the exclusive study of gender.[1] This chapter aims to explore the contribution that an archaeological analysis of places, buildings and material culture once used by female religious communities in later medieval Ireland can make to the interdisciplinary study of gender, places, spaces and thresholds. It first provides an overview of the archaeological evidence of later medieval nunneries in Ireland where a diversity of arrangement is crucial to an understanding of nunnery space. Theoretical approaches to monastic space in archaeology are outlined, and the Irish evidence is considered through lenses of space, place, time, experience and performance of the female religious communities that once used them. The discussion of place and space is then broadened to a consideration of the nunneries' estates as an important facet of the interaction of the nunnery community with their hinterlands. Conclusions are reached in regard to how medieval nunneries in Ireland compare to those elsewhere, and how they might be further usefully researched.

Overview of the archaeological evidence

Later medieval Ireland (*c.*1100–1540) is bracketed by twelfth-century church reform and the sixteenth-century dissolution of the monasteries. Sixty-five nunneries date to this period, twenty-eight of which have some above ground register.[2] The historical evidence for them is particularly sparse:

---

[1] It could be argued that the archaeological study of female religious is in a 'post-gender' phase, with considerations such as landscape now predominating: M. Johnson, *Ideas of Landscape* (Oxford, 2007).

[2] See T. Collins, 'An archaeological perspective on female monasticism in the middle ages in Ireland', in *Women in the Medieval Monastic World*, ed. J. Burton and K. Stöber (Turnhout, 2015) pp. 229–51.

T. Collins, 'Space and place: archaeologies of female monasticism in later medieval Ireland', in *Gender in medieval places, spaces and thresholds*, ed. V. Blud, D. Heath and E. Klafter (2018), pp. 25–44.

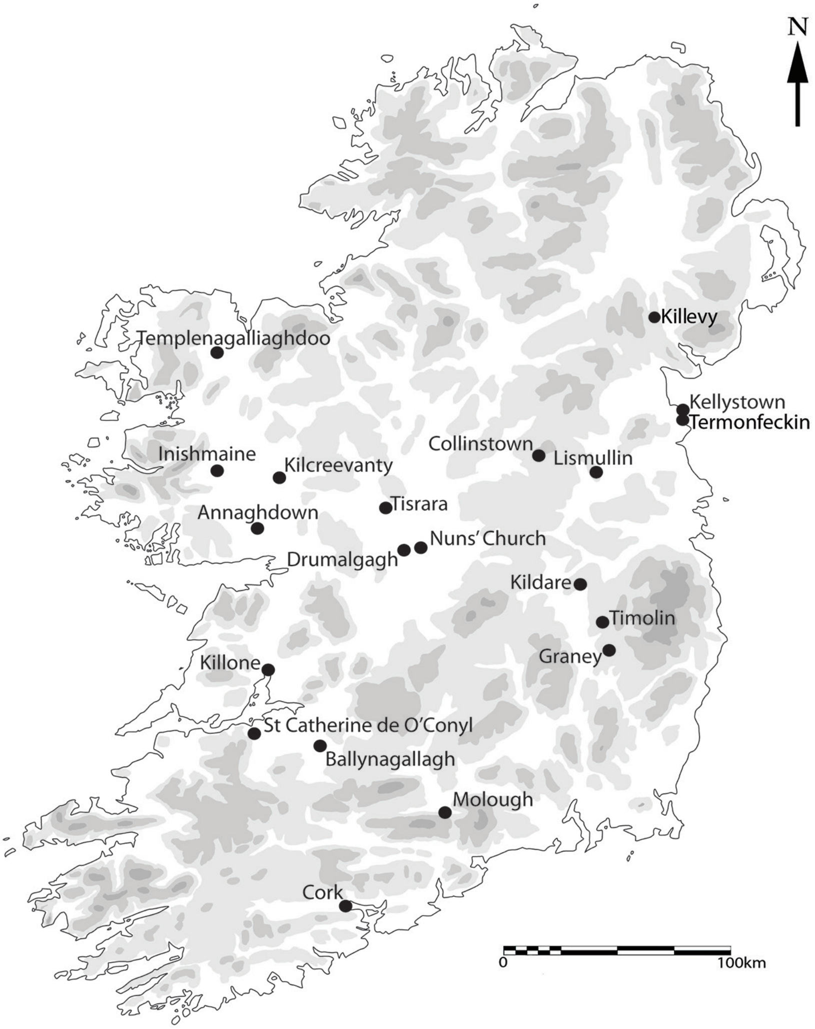

N
Killevy
Templenagalliaghdoo
Kellystown
Termonfeckin
Collinstown
Lismullin
Inishmaine
Kilcreevanty
Tisrara
Annaghdown
Nuns' Church
Drumalgagh
Kildare
Timolin
Graney
Killone
St Catherine de O'Conyl
Ballynagallagh
Molough
Cork
0
100km

Figure 2.1. Later medieval nunneries in Ireland mentioned in the text.

'looking for traces of medieval women's activities in medieval Ireland means looking with eyes trained for omissions, ellipses and small clues'.[3] Moreover, the archaeological evidence of female monasticism in medieval Ireland does not fit neatly into the categories created for contemporary male religious houses. There is no singular archaeology of female monasticism in Ireland, rather nunneries have used the general 'vocabulary' of medieval religious house architecture.[4] The majority of nunneries were founded in the twelfth century, Ireland's period of church and monastic reform.[5] Nunneries were founded in subsequent centuries from the thirteenth through to the sixteenth, but numbers were much fewer. This decline should not be perceived as a reduction in nunnery patronage, as many of the earlier foundations continued to exist and thus filled demand in later times. Occasionally nunnery communities were known to have moved location, particularly when they were initially founded at 'co-located' sites, or in close proximity to male religious houses.[6]

Notwithstanding that the affiliation of several nunneries in Ireland remains unknown, the majority were Augustinian of Arroasian observance.[7] As in England, Wales or Normandy, nunneries in Ireland had royal, ecclesiastical and lay patrons, founding female houses for a variety of reasons. These sections of society continued to found and support nunneries, sometimes over several generations.[8] However, unlike in other regions, female founders were relatively rare in medieval Ireland, with only three clearly associated with nunneries in the historical records: Derbforgaill, the 're-builder' of the Nuns' church at Clonmacnoise, Co. Offaly, in 1167; Avicia de la Corner, sister of the bishop of Meath, who founded Lismullin, Co. Meath about 1240; and the recluse Agnes de Hareford, instigator of the nunnery at

---

[3] D. Hall, *Women and the Church in Medieval Ireland* c.*1140–1540* (Dublin, 2003), p. 16.

[4] T. O'Keeffe, *Medieval Irish Buildings 1100–1600* (Dublin, 2015), pp. 101–83.

[5] Some 31 nunneries date to this period (T. Collins, 'Transforming women religious? Church reform and the archaeology of female monasticism', in *Monastic Europe: Medieval Communities, Landscapes and Settlements,* ed. E. Bhreathnach, M. Krasnodębska Daughton and K. Smith (Turnhout, forthcoming); M. T. Flanagan, *The Transformation of the Irish Church in the Twelfth Century* (Woodbridge, 2010)).

[6] Co-located houses were where religious women and men lived in close proximity and may have shared facilities. In Ireland, they do not appear to have used the double-house arrangement of twin cloisters known elsewhere, and so they have been termed co-located to differentiate them. Co-located houses have been described as monastic experiments, many of which appear to have been unsuccessful (Flanagan, *The Transformation*, pp. 150–4).

[7] P. Dunning, 'The Arroasian order in medieval Ireland', *Irish Historical Studies*, iv (1945), 297–315.

[8] K. Stöber, *Late Medieval Monasteries and their Patrons: England and Wales* c.*1300–1540* (Woodbridge, 2007), p. 29; L. V. Hicks, *Religious Life in Normandy 1050–1300: Space, Gender and Social Pressure* (Woodbridge, 2007).

Cork in 1297.[9] This is a surprisingly small number and it is postulated that women's agency in the foundation of nunneries has been masked in records by those of their male relations.[10]

Theoretical perspectives

Despite the seminal works of Roberta Gilchrist in engendered monastic archaeology studies,[11] nunneries in Ireland until the early 2000s were still considered unworthy of scholarly interest. The perception lingered that they had deviated from the male monastic standard, and were thus somehow inferior to contemporary male religious houses. Furthermore, a relative dearth of historical source material, particularly that produced by female religious communities themselves, has resulted in female monasticism being understudied in Ireland.[12] This position has somewhat marginalized nunneries in historical and archaeological narratives of medieval monasticism. Theoretical perspectives in monastic and landscape archaeology were slow to gain traction in Ireland, generally not being considered until the 2000s.[13] Like many disciplines, archaeology was eventually transformed by the three waves of feminism and various engendered approaches, though it has been argued that it remains a work in progress.[14] Female monasticism is now being critically analysed on its own archaeological merits, and in comparison with a female standard comprising female religious houses elsewhere, so that new 'angle[s] of vision'[15] can be opened up in the exploration of medieval female monasticism in Ireland.

---

[9] J. Ní Ghradaigh, 'But what exactly did she give? Derbforgaill and the nuns' church at Clonmacnoise', in *Clonmacnoise Studies 2*, ed. H. King (Dublin, 2003), pp. 175–207; A. Gywnn and R. Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses Ireland* (Dublin, 1970), pp. 315, 322.

[10] S. Thompson, *Women Religious: the Founding of English Nunneries After the Norman Conquest* (Oxford, 1991).

[11] R. Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture: the Archaeology of Religious Women* (1994) and *Contemplation and Action: the Other Monasticism* (1995). Gilchrist has proven that the comparison of nunneries with male houses is unjust; nunneries did not have the same functions as male houses, and therefore any direct comparison is otiose.

[12] J. Burton, *Monastic and Religious Orders in Britain 1000–1300* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 85; Hall, *Women and the Church*, pp.16–20.

[13] E.g., T. O'Keeffe, *Romanesque Ireland* (Dublin, 2003); T. Ó Carragáin, *Churches in Early Medieval Ireland* (New Haven, Conn., 2010).

[14] E.g., R. Gilchrist, 'Women's archaeology? Political feminism, gender theory and historical revision', *Antiquity*, lxv (1991), 495–501; R. Preucel and I. Hodder, *Contemporary Archaeology in Theory: a Reader* (Oxford, 1996), p. 416; J. Bennett, 'Medievalism and feminism', in *Studying Medieval Women*, ed. N. Partner (Cambridge, Mass., 1993), pp. 7–29, at p. 25; S. Nelson, *Gender in Archaeology* (Walnut Creek, Calif., 2004), p. 158.

[15] A. Wylie, 'The interplay of evidential constraints and political interest: recent archaeological research on gender', *American Antiquity*, lvii (1992), 15–35.

Humanly created and occupied spaces have long been the subject of study.[16] Medieval female religious communities constructed specific spaces in which they worshiped and lived. Space would appear to be self-explanatory, but a precise meaning remains elusive.[17] Space is a multi-dimensional zone, 'in which substances, people and objects move';[18] it is 'neither inert nor neutral, nor is its organization, articulation or the formulation of its boundaries a natural phenomenon. Rather spatial constructs are the historical and cultural products of an age. As metaphors and symbolic systems, they embody the most basic rules and meaning of a culture'.[19] Space can be 'in between' zones or at interfaces, it can be the expanses of landscape or can be created within structures, it can be physical or metaphysical. Space is no longer considered absolute and empty, and the term 'place' is now recognized by some as a better guide to medieval thinking about the lived environment than modern abstract notions of space.[20] Furthermore, it can be argued that space is an ordering principle through which human hierarchies are created and maintained.[21] As such, space is humanly created and can change over time and location and it can possess various meanings for different individuals or groups. It is a medium through which social relationships are played out, regulated and negotiated, as they are in monasteries.[22]

---

[16] P. Bourdieu, *Distinction: a Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (1979); P. Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Cambridge, 1990); M. de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley, Calif., 1984); M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison* (New York, 1977); B. Hillier and J. Hanson, *The Social Logic of Space* (Cambridge, 1984); H. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. D. Nicholson-Smith (Oxford, 1991, orig. 1974); D. Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender* (Minneapolis, Minn., 1994).

[17] Y. Tuan, *Space and Place: the Perspective of Experience* (1977); E. Casey, 'Place in landscape archaeology: a western philosophical prelude', in *Handbook of Landscape Archaeology*, ed. B. David and J. Thomas (Walnut Creek, Calif., 2008), pp. 44–50.

[18] E. De Paermentier, 'Experiencing space through women's convent rules: the Rich Clares in medieval Ghent', *Medieval Feminist Forum*, xliv (2008), 53–68, at p. 54.

[19] J. Schulenberg, 'Gender, celibacy and proscriptions of sacred space: symbol and practice', in *Women's Space Patronage: Place and Gender in the Medieval Church,* ed. V. C. Raguin and S. Stanbury (Albany, N.Y., 2005), pp. 185–205, at p. 185.

[20] K. Biddick, 'Genders, bodies, borders: technologies of the visible', in Partner, *Studying Medieval Women*, pp. 87–116; B. Hanawalt and M. Kobialka, *Medieval Practices of Space* (2000), p. xii; A. Müller, 'Symbolic meanings of space in female monastic tradition', in *Women in the Medieval Monastic World*, ed. J. Burton and K. Stöber (Turnhout, 2015), pp. 299–326.

[21] Bourdieu, *Distinction*; Hanawalt and Kobialka, *Medieval Practices*.

[22] R. Gilchrist, 'Community and self: perceptions and use of space in medieval monasteries', *Scottish Archaeological Review*, vi (1989), 55–64, at p. 55; M. Cassidy-Welch, *Monastic Spaces and their Meanings: Thirteenth-Century English Cistercian Monasteries* (Turnhout, 2001), pp. 2–12; J. Kerr, *Life in the Medieval Cloister* (2009), pp. 20–37.

Monasticism, despite its ideals and codified behaviour, or *habitus*, did not operate in a vacuum and other aspects of society, particularly status, shaped how space was formed and used throughout the middle ages.[23] Male and female monastic space was also different.[24] The codified behaviour within monasteries was formed to some extent of the norms and rules of the hierarchical class-divided society, the social norms of aristocratic men and women, and the treatment they expected from the lower strata.[25] Most professed religious men and women are generally thought to have come from this elite background and their learned social norms were carried through into the monastic space.[26] Knowing one's place in medieval society was intrinsic to how all medieval spaces were negotiated.[27] The interplay between the enclosed spaces of a nunnery, its religious community, and other necessary individuals within that space is an important theme. This theme is further embodied in notions of public and private spheres of space, which had specific meanings for enclosed nuns.[28] Added to this, any archaeological study of space and place must also consider time-depth and stages in the life course.[29]

Wider monastic spaces also require consideration in the archaeological study of nunneries. Landscape archaeology is 'central to the archaeological programme as a whole because the history of human life is about ways of inhabiting the world',[30] and has been described as a domain where the perceived gap between archaeological theory and practice might be bridged.[31] A fluid movement between theoretical considerations of the wider landscapes of female monastic communities to the more specific spaces and life courses of individual women religious is required. A medieval woman may have entered a nunnery at any stage in her life – as a young novice, as an adult woman, as a corrodian on an intermittent basis, or as a widow becoming a vowess rather than a fully professed nun. She may have been a professed nun perhaps holding an office, or another member of the nunnery household such as a servant. All these aspects of an individual's life may be explored through the lens of gender, space and place. Many of the key events in a nunnery, such as entering religious life, taking vows, attending the daily divine office, observing the annual liturgical calendar, or celebrating a patron saint's feast day, or the birthday or anniversary of a patron, would have been marked through ritual and ceremony in a specific place within the nunnery. Some of these events might be recognized in the archaeological evidence, if the correct research questions can be asked of that data. A broad approach, considering space and place as outlined here, is an ideal perspective from which to ask such new gender-related questions of the archaeological evidence.

---

[23] M. Mersch, 'Programme, pragmatism and symbolism in mendicant architecture', in *Self-Representation of Medieval Religious Communities: the British Isles in Contexti*, ed. A. Müller and K. Stöber (Berlin, 2009), pp. 143–66.

[24] Müller, 'Symbolic meanings', p. 302.

[25] Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture*, p. 152.

[26] C. H. Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism* (Harlow, 2001), pp. 217–18; D. Hall, 'Necessary collaborations: religious women and lay communities in medieval Ireland *c.*1200–1540', in *Irish Women's History*, ed. A. Hayes and D. Urquhart (Dublin, 2004), pp. 15–28, at p. 25; G. Kenny, *Anglo-Irish and Gaelic Women in Ireland* c.*1170–1540* (Dublin, 2007), p. 170. For an alternative view, that nuns did not come from the aristocratic classes in certain regions, see B. Harris, 'A new look at the Reformation: aristocratic women and nunneries 1450–1540', *Jour. British Studies*, xxxii (1993), 89–113; M. Oliva, 'Aristocracy or meritocracy? Office holding patterns in late medieval English nunneries', *Studies in Church History,* xxvii (1990), 197–208.

[27] R. Gilchrist, *Gender and Archaeology: Contesting the Past* (1999), pp. 113–18; R. Gilchrist, *Medieval Life, Archaeology and the Life Course* (Woodbridge, 2012), pp. 68–113; R. H. Britnell, *Britain and Ireland 1050–1530: Economy and Society* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 7–70.

[28] De Paermentier, 'Experiencing space', p. 53.

[29] Gilchrist, *Medieval Life*.

[30] J. C. Barrett, 'Chronologies of landscape,' in *The Archaeology and Anthropology of Landscape*, ed. P. Ucko and R. Layton (1999), pp. 21–30, at p 30.

Place in the landscape: siting

Most nunneries in medieval England are considered isolated in the landscape, their sites deliberately chosen, perhaps, as Gilchrist has suggested, in order to pursue a long-established ascetic eremetic monastic tradition.[32] Of the 150 or so nunneries in England and Wales, 125 are considered to be in remote locations and the remaining twenty-five have been described as suburban.[33] This distribution was long assumed to be the same in Ireland,[34] but recent study has shown that Irish nunneries were for the most part situated in proximity to and sometimes within walled towns, larger unenclosed settlements, castles and, on occasion, male religious houses.[35] They did remain apart from other nunneries, but probably as the result of patronage patterns rather than an adherence to a specific distance rule between nunneries. Hall has suggested that proximity to other settlements provided protection for the female religious community, something which was not such a consideration in medieval England, given its relatively less turbulent landscapes.[36] However, this is not entirely satisfactory, since a similar pattern is noted in male mendicant houses in Ireland, many of which were located in proximity to the castles of their patrons. A better explanation might be that these locations were mutually beneficial, the patron providing protection and material support, while enjoying an enhanced reputation as a benefactor with a serious commitment to the Church. Furthermore, there would be a striking juxtaposition of the art and architecture of the aristocratic residences and the more austere aesthetic of the religious foundations.[37] Given the family ties of patronage and the physical proximity of many nunneries to their local contemporary communities in medieval Ireland, it can be suggested that their primary function was one of service and interaction with that surrounding community. Likewise, it has been concluded that the minority of English nunneries located in proximity to

---

[31] W. Ashmore, 'Social archaeologies of landscape', in *A Companion to Social Archaeology*, ed. L. Meskell and R. W. Preucel (Oxford, 2007), pp. 255–71, at p. 255.

[32] Gilchrist, *Contemplation*, p. 155.

[33] J. Bond, 'Medieval nunneries in England and Wales: buildings, precincts and estates', in *Women and Religion in Medieval England*, ed. D. Wood (Oxford, 2003), p. 54.

[34] Bond, 'Medieval nunneries', pp. 46–90, at p. 54.

[35] T. Collins, 'Isolated in the wilderness? An archaeological exploration of nunneries in the later medieval landscape of Ireland', in *Church and Settlement in Ireland*, ed. M. Stout and J. Lyttleton (Dublin, 2018), pp. 142–56.

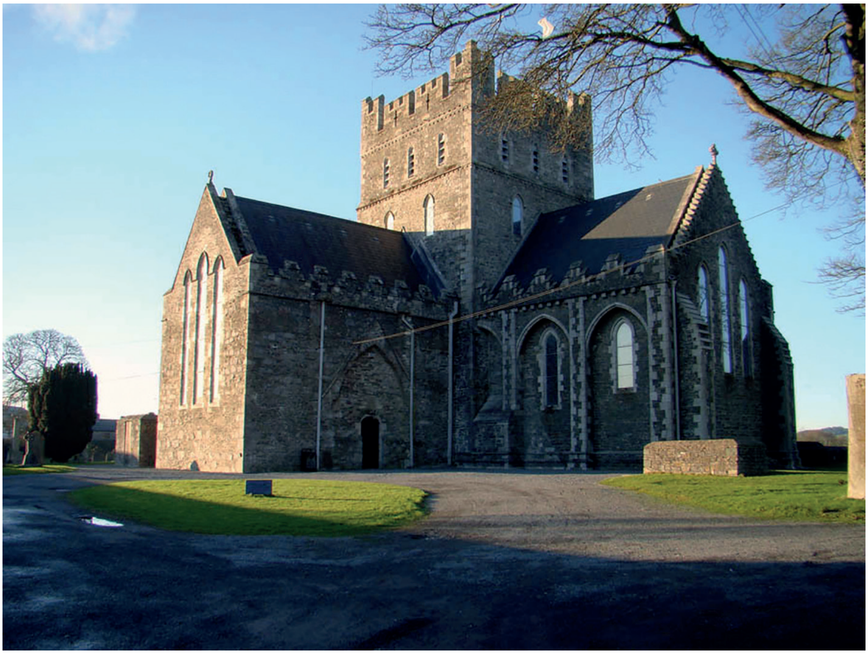


Figure 2.2. Kildare cathedral, Co. Kildare, and example of site reuse. This is the supposed location of both the early medieval and later medieval nunnery at Kildare, of which there is now little if any material evidence.

---

[36] Hall, *Women and the Church*, p. 94.

[37] C. Ó Clabaigh, *The Friars in Ireland 1224–1540* (Dublin, 2012), pp. 205–7.

their patrons were also ‘intended by their founders to interact closely with the local community’.[38]

Place reuse: sacred spaces

In the case of ten nunneries (Kildare being one), place and sacred space may have been particularly significant as they reused ecclesiastical sites of the early medieval period. In some cases, early fabric was incorporated into later nunnery churches, as at Inishmaine, Co. Mayo and Killevy, Co. Armagh.[39] Whether this reuse of place represents a continuity of use over the period of church reform or reoccupation of sites previously abandoned is perhaps a moot point, and it is likely that both scenarios occurred. But regardless of the mechanics of reuse, the fact that older sites were chosen as places for later nunneries is considered important and not merely coincidence. It shows that continuity – or the *impression* of continuity – of religious use at a place was significant.[40] Moreover, nunneries were not established in ‘empty’ landscapes. For example, at St. Catherine’s, Co. Limerick the extant archaeological monuments show that it was in use in the prehistoric and early medieval periods.[41] There is a prehistoric megalithic structure and a standing stone in proximity to the nunnery, and finds of prehistoric burials and objects were made there in the nineteenth century.[42] It is interesting to postulate that the community of nuns was cognisant of these earlier uses of the landscape. Discovery of early artefacts and monuments on or near medieval sites is usually deemed coincidental due to the preponderance of prehistoric monuments in Ireland generally, but at many later prehistoric and early medieval ecclesiastical and secular sites it has been suggested that the deposition or use of earlier monuments and artefacts was a deliberate act of social memory and ownership.[43] Both Augustinian canons and Cistercian monks purposefully reused earlier sites for their foundations, which is interpreted as a way for the religious houses to gain historical currency and rootedness in a particular area.[44] The reuse of pagan monuments by Christians could be viewed as a source of kudos, a method of controlling the power of the monuments, or harnessing them to protect a Christian site. But pagan monuments have also been considered dangerous and to be avoided,[45] so perhaps the Christian settlements that grew up around them reflected the ascetic nature of some of those foundations – that they put themselves in danger and in the way of temptation in order to test their faith, as Christ did in the desert. The past is particularly important as it defines the self in the present.[46] Moreover, the past is frequently represented by things, objects or monuments – 'objects anchor time'.[47] Perhaps it was in this sense that older monuments around the nunnery of St. Catherine's were perceived by its religious community.[48]

---

[38] Gilchrist, *Contemplation*, p. 155.

[39] In some instances, early medieval ecclesiastical male sites were refounded as nunneries, as at Inishmaine, Co. Mayo.

[40] A. Abram, ‘Augustinian canons and the survival of cult centres in medieval England’, in *The Regular Canons in the British Isles*, ed. J. Burton and K. Stöber (Turnhout, 2011), pp. 79–96.

[41] D. J. Meltzer, ‘Lessons in landscape learning’, in *Colonisation of Unfamiliar Landscapes: the Archaeology of Adaptation*, ed. M. Rockman and J. Steele (2003), pp. 222–41, at pp. 223–5.

[42] J. Wardell, ‘The history and antiquities of St. Catherine’s Old Abbey, County Limerick (with a description of the conventual buildings by T. J. Westropp)’, *Jour. of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland,* xiv (1904), 41–64, at pp. 52–3.

[43] S. Semple, *Perceptions of the Prehistoric in Anglo-Saxon England: Religion, Ritual and Rulership in the Landscape* (Oxford, 2013); S. Driscoll, ‘Picts and prehistory: cultural resource-management in early medieval Scotland’, *World Archaeology*, xxx (1998), 142–58; S. Foot, ‘What was an early Anglo-Saxon monastery?’, in *Monastic Studies: the Continuity of Tradition*, ed. J. Loades (Bangor,

Organization of space: enclosure

Field surveys of nunneries in Ireland have shown that enclosure was expressed more symbolically than materially in later medieval Ireland, as none of the extant remains provides any evidence of stone precinct walls. This supports Gerald of Wales's contemporary description of a co-located religious house, likely to be Termonfeckin, Co. Louth (which later became a female-only community), which he described as 'not with a wall or a ditch but only with hedges made of sharpened stakes and blackthorn'. Elsewhere he described and illustrated a boundary at Kildare as a hedge.[49] So it appears that enclosure of religious women may have been symbolic and

---

1990), pp. 48–57; M. E. Meredith-Lobay, 'Memory, landscapes and the early historic monasteries of Scotland', *Archaeological Review from Cambridge*, xx (2005), 97–110; M. Carver, 'Early Scottish monasteries and prehistory: a preliminary dialogue', *Scottish Historical Review*, lxxxviii (2009), 332–51; Ó Carragáin, *Churches,* pp. 143–9, 156–7; E. Bhreathnach, *Ireland in the Medieval World AD 400–1000: Landscape, Kingship and Religion* (Dublin, 2014), pp. 131–48.

[44] G. Carville, *The Occupation of Celtic Sites in Medieval Ireland by the Canons Regular of St. Augustine and the Cistercians* (Kalamazoo, Mich., 1982).

[45] Semple, *Perceptions of the Prehistoric*. The prehistoric stone circle deliberately avoided by the early medieval ecclesiastical enclosures around Armagh could be perceived in this way: Ó Carragáin, *Churches*, p. 157.

[46] R. Bradley, 'Time regained: the creation of continuity', *Jour. of the British Archaeological Association,* cxl (1987), 1–17; R. Bradley, *The Past in Prehistoric Societies* (2002); S. Alcock, *Archaeologies of the Greek Past: Landscape, Monuments and Memories* (Cambridge, 2002).

[47] Tuan, *Space and Place*, p. 187.

[48] Within a 2km radius of the nunnery itself there are no fewer than 44 recorded enclosures, two castles (now no longer extant) and more than five prehistoric monuments.

[49] *Giraldus Cambrensis' Speculum Ecclesie*, trans. B. Golding (Oxford, forthcoming); T. Wright, *Giraldus Cambrensis: the Topography of Ireland*, trans. T. Forester (Ontario, 2000).

created within social mores and codified behaviour rather than a physical manifestation in the landscape. Furthermore, while enclosure of medieval female religious has been widely considered to be a severe restriction on their space, imposed by a misogynistic hierarchy, contemporary medieval nuns seem either never to have complained, or to have had their complaints go undocumented. Therefore, the possibility must be considered that religious enclosure may also have been perceived as a positive influence in the lives of individual nuns and the community itself, removing them from the worldly space and helping to forge their spiritual identity.[50]

Diversity of form

Diversity is the key to understanding space in the archaeology and architecture of nunneries. Variation in nunnery plans in England is considered a defining feature; however, this variation usually occurred within the context of a claustral plan.[51] Variety in nunnery layout is also found in Germany where a large proportion of nunneries used non-claustrally planned spaces, termed 'open systems'.[52] In Ireland, research has shown that claustrally arranged medieval nunneries were not the norm, and it can be suggested that perhaps only ten or so nunneries in Ireland ever exhibited a proper claustral plan. Of these, only three are now extant and all exhibit a variety of form within the cloister: Killone, Co. Clare, with a cloister to the south of its church; Molough, Co. Tipperary, with a northern cloister and, most unusually, St. Catherine's, Co. Limerick, with a cloister at the west end of a projecting church.[53] This diversity has been historically considered 'non-conformance' to a standard template. This is not just a female phenomenon as variety has long been recognized in male religious architecture, most notably Augustinian.[54] It can be concluded that there is no standardization of plan in medieval nunneries in Ireland, on a temporal

---

[50] T. Collins, 'Archaeologies of female monasticism in Ireland', in *Becoming and Belonging in Ireland AD* c.*1200–1600: Essays in Identity and Cultural Practice,* ed. E. Campbell, E. FitzPatrick and A. Horning (Cork, 2018), pp. 69–87.

[51] R. Gilchrist, 'The archaeology of medieval English nunneries: a research design', in *The Archaeology of Rural Monasteries*, ed. R. Gilchrist and H. Mytum (B.A.R. British Series 203, Oxford, 1989), pp. 251–7, at p. 255.

[52] C. Mohn, *Mittelalterliche Klosteranlagen der Zisterzienserinnen: Architektur der Frauenkloster im mitteldeutschen Raum* (Petersberg, 2006).

[53] Kilcreevanty, Co. Galway might be added to this list but it is now very difficult to confirm in the field.

[54] D. M. Robinson, 'The Augustinian canons in England and Wales: architecture, archaeology and liturgy 1100–1540', *Monastic Research Bulletin,* xviii (2012), 2–29; T. O'Keeffe, 'Augustinian regular canons in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Ireland: history, architecture and identity', in Burton and Stöber, *Regular Canons in the Medieval British Isles*, pp. 469–84.

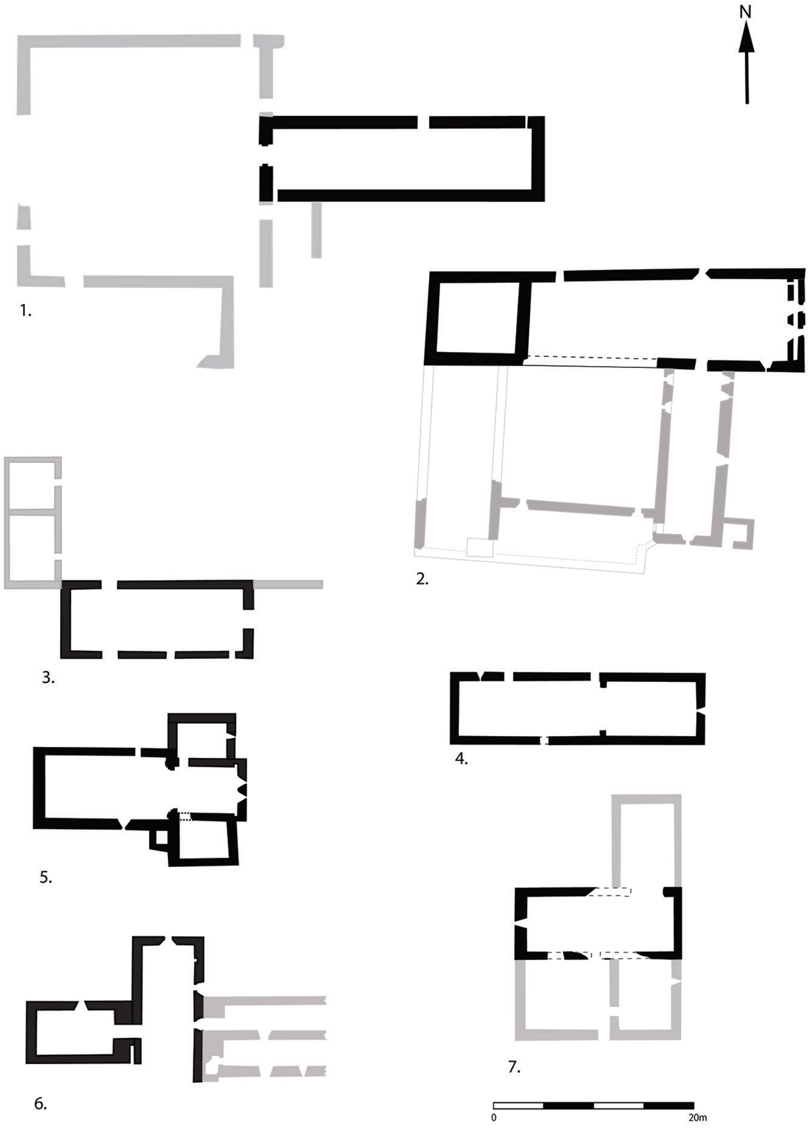


Figure 2.3. Diversity in nunnery layouts (black indicates church structure). St. Catherine's, Co. Limerick (1); Killone, Co. Clare (2); Molough, Co. Tipperary (3); Annaghdown, Co. Galway (4); Inishmaine, Co. Mayo (5); Tisrara (6) and Drumalgagh (7), both Co. Roscommon.

or regional basis, along filial or ethnic lines, and a range of layouts was adopted and persisted over the course of the period.[55]

Space in church

Despite fluid arrangements, the church was maintained as a constant in the nunnery complex.[56] The archaeological evidence shows that nunnery churches in later medieval Ireland were aisleless parallelograms, without transepts or structural internal divisions of stone. There is a dearth of direct archaeological evidence for internal differentiation, though it can be postulated that textile and timber screens were used as in England and on the Continent. Archaeological evidence shows that nuns used both the east and west ends of their churches in different periods, sharing the sacred space with clergy and, when parochial, with the laity.[57] The use of nunnery churches as parish churches is likely to have had a significant effect on how church space was used, as nuns in this situation not only had to be separated from the priest on the high altar, but also from lay parishioners. Architectural responses to a parochial function varied. The use of west-end galleries by nuns to maintain segregation is a feature common in nunnery churches in Germany, and the nunnery on Iona in Scotland used the same approach; but no such direct evidence for galleries was found in nunnery churches in Ireland.[58] At St. Catherine's, Co. Limerick, recorded as parochial in the fifteenth century, evidence shows that the nuns used the west end of the church, similar to arrangements in some French nunneries. An incised ship, a recognized Christian religious symbol, is located near the west end of the church, perhaps indicating the location of a nun's altar there, or the location of the parish's baptismal font.[59] There is also some tentative archaeological evidence in Ireland that nunneries may have supported anchorites.[60] On this basis it can be suggested that the architectural traditions of nunneries had more in common with those of medieval parish churches than with those of male monastic sites. This may be because nunneries were firmly embedded within their regional and local religious contexts, and further from the national and international male monastic sphere.

---

[55] In addition to the claustral layouts, smaller churches with attached or unattached domestic accommodation were used, e.g. Annaghdown, Co. Galway; Inishmaine, Co. Mayo; and Tisrara and Drumalgagh, Co. Roscommon.

[56] For an overview, see V. Raguin and S. Stanbury, *Women's Space: Patronage, Place and Gender in the Medieval Church* (New York, 2005).

[57] In a Gaelic Irish context, pastoral ministry was quite often provided at religious houses: E. FitzPatrick, 'The material world of the parish', in *The Parish in Medieval and Early Modern Ireland: Community, Territory and Building,* ed. E. FitzPatrick and R. Gillespie (Dublin, 2006), pp. 62–78, at p. 72. Several nunneries in England were established at parish churches: Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture,* p. 124. In Ireland several nunnery churches became parochial sometime after foundation, reversing the trend recorded in England for the establishment of nunneries at pre-existing parish centres. This difference in region is probably due to the slower processes of parish formation in Ireland, or changes in parish structure and division over time.

[58] Mohn has recorded nuns' choirs in almost every location possible within the church space and M. Untermann agrees with this conclusion: C. Mohn, *Mittelalterliche Klosteranlagen*; M. Untermann, 'The place of the choir in churches of female convents in the medieval German kingdom', in Burton and Stöber, *Women in the Medieval Monastic World*, pp. 327–53, at p. 348. There is also evidence to suggest that nuns may have had more than one dedicated space in shared nunnery churches, e.g. the Franciscan double house of Königsfelden in Switzerland: C. Jäggi, 'Eastern choir or western gallery? The problem of the place of the nuns' choir in Koenigsfelden and other early mendicant nunneries', *Gesta*, xl (2001), 79–93, at p. 82.

The identification of an architectural diversity and fluidity of form in the physical layout of nunneries has placed a much greater emphasis on the nature of ritual and performance, and 'space as practised place'.[61] The spiritual environment of nunneries, the materiality of the buildings themselves and the material culture shaped the *habitus* of the religious communities: they provided 'a practical logic and sense of order that is learned unconsciously through the enactment of everyday life'.[62] The celebration of the divine office, mass, feast days and the office of the dead, punctuated the lives of nuns and created a daily and seasonal rhythm through regular performance. A claustral plan, or an unshared church were clearly not essential in the creation of this rhythm. Any place where the divine office was celebrated could become imbued with a sacred quality through repetition and performance.

Place in the landscape: estates and hinterlands

An important and relatively understudied aspect of the medieval 'nunscape' is that of estates.[63] In order to reach some understanding of how nunneries may have functioned, generated incomes and were sustained over time, it is necessary to look into their hinterland. It must not be forgotten that the nuns themselves came from this wider medieval world and had family connections which bound them to it.[64] Historical evidence has shown that prioresses forged and maintained important relationships with the outside world, balancing the needs of their religious and local communities.[65] Like male religious houses, nunneries held temporalities and spiritualities in the form of real estate, rights and benefices, as a means of continued support. Nunneries received modest endowments from patrons and benefactors from the outset in comparison to their male counterparts, and it can be inferred that they had different expectations of male and female religious houses.[66] In particular, nunneries were not required by their patrons to be self-sufficient in the way expected of male religious houses.[67] Traditional historical accounts have characterized nunnery communities as being incompetent in their role as estate managers, due to non-consolidation of lands, poor management and extravagance,[68] and these are but a few of the reasons used to explain the relative poverty of nunneries.[69] More nuanced discussions of the economic status of nunneries are emerging which challenge the traditional narrative.[70] Poverty may have been an ascetic

---

[59] T. Collins, 'Missing the boat ...', *Archaeology Ireland*, xxiv (2010), 9–11; M. Gardiner, 'Graffiti and their use in late medieval England', in *Arts and Crafts in Medieval Rural Environment. Ruralia 6*, ed. J. Klapste and P. Sommer (Prague, 2007), pp. 265–76.

[60] St. Catherine's, Co. Limerick and the small church at Templenagallidoo, Co. Mayo both retain features that may indicate the presence of an anchorite, though neither is historically recorded as anchorholds. For historical references of anchorites in medieval Ireland, see C. Ó Clabaigh, 'Anchorites in late medieval Ireland', in *Anchoritic Traditions of Medieval Europe,* ed. L. Herbert McAvoy (Woodbridge, 2010), pp. 153–77.

[61] A. Müller, 'Presenting identity in the cloister: remarks on benedictine and mendicant concepts of space', in Müller and Stöber, *Self-representation of Medieval Religious Communities*, p. 169.

[62] Gilchrist, *Gender and archaeology*, p. 81; Hicks, *Religious Life*, p. 206.

[63] The broad study of historic settlement in later medieval Ireland still remains largely unproblematized, despite important publications on various aspects. E.g., K. O'Conor,

---

The Archaeology of Medieval Rural Settlement in Ireland (Dublin, 1998); C. Corlett and M. Potterton, *Rural Settlement in Medieval Ireland* (Dublin, 2009); T. Barry, *A History of Settlement in Ireland* (2002). Themes within 'historic settlement' tend to be studied in isolation of each other and there is little exploration of interfaces and interactions, but see, as an exception, M. Murphy and M. Potterton, *The Dublin Region in the Middle Ages* (Dublin, 2010).

[64] P. Johnson, *Equal in Monastic Profession: Religious Women in Medieval France* (Chicago, Ill., 1991), pp. 248–53; P. Lee, *Nunneries, Learning and Spirituality in Late Medieval English Society: the Dominican Priory of Dartford* (York, 2001), pp. 57–8; Kenny, *Anglo-Irish and Gaelic Women in Ireland*, p. 170.

[65] Lee, *Nunneries*, pp. 57–108; K. Perkins-Curran, '"Quhat say ye now, my lady priores? How have ye usit your office, can ye ges?" Politics, power and realities of the office of a prioress in her community in late medieval Scotland', in *Monasteries and Society in the British Isles in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. J. Burton and K. Stöber (Woodbridge, 2008), pp. 124–41.

[66] Stöber, *Late Medieval Monasteries*, pp. 1–8.

[67] Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture*, p. 44.

[68] E. Power, *Medieval English Nunneries* c.*1275 to 1535* (Cambridge, 1922), pp. 203–12; M. Oliva, *The Convent and the Community in Late Medieval England: Female Monasteries in the Diocese of Norwich 1359–1540* (Woodbridge, 1998), p. 99.

[69] D. Knowles, *The Religious Orders in England* (3 vols., Cambridge, 1948, 1955, 1959).

[70] E.g., J. Burton, *The Yorkshire Nunneries in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries* (York, 1979), pp. 17–27; J. Burton, 'Looking for medieval nuns', in Burton and Stöber, *Monasteries and Society*, pp. 113–23; Bond, 'Medieval nunneries', pp. 77–86; E. Jamroziak, *The Cistercian Order in Medieval Europe 1090–1500* (2013), pp. 124–55; C. Berman, 'Medieval monasticisms',

choice for nunnery communities as a method of living out their spiritual ethos and vows, rather than a symptom of mismanagement.[71] Nunnery estates do compare favourably with smaller male religious houses, and in some cases, such as Timolin, Co. Kildare, were valued higher than most of the other religious houses in the county at the Dissolution.[72] Nunneries' holdings were considered in the past to have been dispersed and therefore unproductive. But this was not always the case. When they can be mapped, the holdings often form discrete parcels of land, or are relatively close to the nunnery complex. It can also be argued that nunnery-held land was productive in other ways, rather than just through tillage, and thus there may have been no necessity for tightly consolidated lands. The holdings of some nunneries may also reflect that they had benefactors in far-flung places, although we cannot confirm this by looking at records, as givers' names and their reason for providing an endowment are now lost.

Studies of nunnery estates usually form part of wider analyses,[73] and to date there have been relatively few studies in Ireland.[74] However, they have all highlighted immediate limitations. Most obviously, the documentary evidence is incomplete and it is likely that the total holdings of a nunnery were never recorded, are now lost, or changed substantially over time.[75] The names of places may illuminate nunnery estates, however, and assist in realising their archaeological signature, a resource that has proven useful in identifying monastic estate features in Britain, but has been under used in

---

in *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Christianity,* ed. J. Arnold (Oxford, 2014), pp. 337–95.

[71] Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture*, p. 44.

[72] M. A. Lyons, 'Revolt and reaction: the Geraldine rebellion and monastic confiscation in Co. Kildare', *Jour. County Kildare Archaeological Society*, xviii (1992–3), 39–60.

[73] E.g., Power, *Medieval Nunneries*; Burton, *Yorkshire Nunneries*; D. K. Coldicott, *Hampshire Nunneries* (Chichester, 1989); Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture*, pp. 69–91; B. Kerr, *Religious Life for Women* c.*1100*–c.*1350: Fontevraud in England* (Oxford, 1999); Bond, 'Medieval nunneries', pp. 77–86; Perkins-Curran, '"Quhat say ye now"', pp. 126–9; J. Bezant, *Medieval Welsh Settlement and Territory: Archaeological Evidence from a Teifi Landscape* (B.A.R. British Series 487, Oxford, 2009).

[74] J. Otway-Ruthven, 'The medieval church lands of County Dublin', in *Medieval Studies Presented to Aubrey Gwynn,* ed. J. A. Watt, J. B. Worrall and F. X. Martin (Dublin, 1961), pp. 54–73; G. Carville, *The Impact of the Cistercians on the Landscape of Ireland* (Wicklow, 2002), pp. 245–50; Hall, *Women and the Church*, pp. 148–9, 153; G. Carville, 'St. Mary's Abbey Graney: to live an apostolic life', *Jour. Kildare Archaeological Society,* xx (2011), 33–56, at pp. 41–9; T. Collins, 'Timolin: a case study of a nunnery estate in later medieval Ireland', *Anuario de Estudios Medievales*, xliv (2014), 51–80.

[75] Hall has tracked holdings of 23 nunneries through the Irish historical documents. None is complete, and many nunneries have no extant records: D. Hall, *Women and Religion in Late Medieval Ireland* (unpublished thesis, 2000), pp. 357–83. The writer is very grateful to Dianne Hall for providing this data and permission to use it.

Ireland.[76] For example, rabbit warrens are among a range of indicators for monastic sites,[77] and their presence is associated with place names such as burg, burrow, buries, coning-erth or conygarth.[78] This proves useful in an Irish context too, where we find names such as 'Snugburrow townland' – situated near the holdings of the nunnery of Timolin.[79] Other specifically Irish place names may indicate female religious activity in an area. The word *Calliagh* or *Cailleach* and its many derivatives, originating in the Irish for 'veiled one', has been long accepted as relating to females and particularly nuns or old/wise women,[80] and so place names incorporating these derivatives are commonly directly associated with nunneries.[81] For instance, the Irish name for St. Catherine's, Co. Limerick is *Monasternagalliaghdubh,* or the monastery of the black nuns, recalling the black habit of the Augustinians. Sometimes there are no known links between places that have names containing derivatives relating to nuns, but we can assume they were once held by a nunnery. For example, the village of Ballycally in Co. Clare, which is locally thought of as 'town of the nuns', has no documented historical connection to Killone, but on the basis of its name might be suggested to have had an association with it at one time.[82]

An important aspect of nunnery estates and indeed religious houses in general, is that they were an intrinsic part of the wider settlement landscape, particularly in those regions of Ireland under Anglo-Irish influence. This has been described as a manorialized landscape in which features associated with lordship and symbols of seigneurial power have been identified such as dovecotes, rabbit warrens, fishponds and deerparks, which together form elite 'landscapes of lordship'.[83] The settlement pattern in the Anglo-Irish-controlled parts of Ireland was in many ways similar to that of England, although a diversity and complexity particular to medieval settlement in Ireland can be identified.[84] Manors were created around masonry and earthwork castles which were employed for defence and administration. Farming was carried out at many of them.[85] Other archaeologically identified settlement types include walled towns, unenclosed villages (deserted medieval villages), rural boroughs, dispersed defended farmsteads such as moated sites, and unenclosed house clusters. In addition, field systems have been identified in the settlement pattern.[86] All of these archaeological features can be associated with the corpus of later medieval nunneries in Ireland. Furthermore, the extant dissolution surveys of several nunneries list various customs due from tenants, which included, for example, the number of days weeding or ploughing, gallons of beer from each brewing and hens at Christmas, showing how the nunneries used their hinterlands and interacted with the wider society.[87]

---

[76] Although its potential has been recently highlighted: G. Stout, 'The Cistercian grange: a medieval farming system', in *Agriculture and Settlement in Ireland*, ed. M. Murphy and M. Stout (Dublin, 2015), pp. 28–68, at pp. 28–30.

[77] Archaeological indicators of monastic estates include: granges; mills; dovecotes; fishponds; warrens; parks, gardens and woodland; wayside crosses; tanneries; stone and millstone quarries; mines or workings of coal or lead; production of ceramic tiles; production of bricks and glass; iron manufacture and working; bell production; salt panning; clay pits; urban property; markets; fairs; and rights and customs. See S. Moorhouse, 'Monastic estates: their composition and development', in Gilchrist and Mytum, *Archaeology of Rural Monasteries*, pp. 29–81.

[78] Moorhouse, 'Monastic estates', p. 65.

[79] Collins, 'Timolin', pp. 62–3.

[80] M. Ní Dhonnchadha 'Caillech and other terms for veiled women in medieval Irish texts', *Éigse*, xxviii (1994), 71–96; G. Ó Crualaoich, *The Book of the Cailleach: Stories of the Wise-Woman Healer* (Cork, 2003), pp. 81–2.

[81] E.g., Templenagalliaghdoo or Ballynagallagh. Sometimes this association is obscured through translation, such as at townlands like Collinstown or Kellystown.

[82] See <http://logainm.ie?Viewer.aspx?text=Ballycally&streets=yes> [accessed 19 July 2017].

Conclusions

Researchers in archaeology and related fields are now looking at different forms of monasticism and teasing out sometimes key contrasts between and within, the various religious orders, so much so that the term 'medieval monasticisms' is gaining currency.[88] Female monasticism, can be regarded as innovative in its fluid approaches to following that particular way of religious life. As Gilchrist's engendered approach to medieval nunneries in England has long shown, nunneries were not deviant to a male standard – nunneries were different, having different purposes from male religious houses, and being distinctly local in character. Furthermore, all medieval nunneries, in themselves, were not the same. Despite Gilchrist's seminal research, there is still much to study. The challenge remains to acknowledge and identify differences between male and female houses, and indeed between female houses, by asking new questions of the evidence and opening fresh debates. This chapter demonstrates that nunnery spaces were not uniform; they differed in size and flexibility of layout and use. Nunneries were usually sited near contemporary settlements of various types and, unlike in medieval England, were found within walled towns. Their precinct boundaries were in the main not of stone and were not for exclusion, but rather demarcation. Nunneries did not always use – and one could argue rarely used – a fully developed claustral plan; perhaps a claustral plan was not considered essential. Medieval nunnery architecture and archaeology in Ireland indicates diversity of form, which is similar to that found elsewhere.

---

[83] M. Murphy and K. O'Conor, 'Castles and deerparks in Ireland', *Eolas*, i (2006), 53–70, at p. 53; M. Murphy, 'Manor centres, settlement and agricultural systems in medieval Ireland, 1250–1350', in Murphy and Stout, *Agriculture and Settlement in Ireland*, pp. 69–100.

[84] O'Conor, *Rural Settlement*, p. 109; T. Barry 'Rural settlement in medieval Ireland', in Barry, *A History of Settlement in Ireland*, pp. 110–23, at pp. 112–18.

[85] O'Conor, *Rural Settlement*, pp. 17–39.

[86] O'Conor, *Rural Settlement*, pp. 57–71.

[87] N. B. White, *Extents of Irish Monastic Possession 1540–41: Manuscripts held in the Public Record Office, London* (Dublin, 1943).

[88] Berman, 'Medieval monasticisms', p. 337.

Nunneries had estates, which clearly impacted upon the landscape, though they continue to be a vastly understudied archaeological resource. These estates were formed of temporal and spiritual holdings which were managed over a considerable period of time. Holdings were not static, but probably grew and contracted throughout the life of the nunnery. Where the evidence is available, nunneries' wealth compares favourably with that of smaller male religious houses. Where nunneries were the place of the parish church, they were enmeshed in parish pastoral care, providing church services, the sacraments of baptism and last rites, as well as a place for burial and remembrance. In several cases, these were in addition to services provided to the local population, such as almsgiving and education.[89] These relationships were reciprocal, the nunneries in return getting support from the local population through patronage and benefaction, tenants working on the land, and trade. The use of space within female monastic complexes, by the nuns and other groups, transformed these spaces, through performance and routine, into special places in which to worship, work and live. Overall, the evidence shows that nunneries were important, making their 'nunscapes' a constituent part of the fabric of medieval society at a particularly local level.

---

[89] For other duties undertaken by female religious, such as hospital care, and contemporary attitudes to their roles, see P. Byrne and S. Sweetinburgh's chapters in this volume.

3. Making space for leprous nuns: Matthew Paris and the foundation of St. Mary de Pré, St. Albans*

Philippa Byrne

Christina's fingernail

I begin with a small act of medieval vandalism: a little sign of the cross on a wooden door of the abbey of St. Albans, scratched there by the fingernail of Christina of Markyate when she was brought to visit the abbey as a child. Christina did it, the author of her *Life* tells the reader,[1] as a means of showing 'quod in illo specialiter monasterio suum recondidisset affectum'.[2] In the *Life*, that affection is stowed away for some considerable time, for it is not until much later in the text – and far on into Christina's saintly struggles – that the physical edifice of St. Albans figures again.[3] Christina, her holiness by now well established, is wooed by many foundations and religious leaders, invited to join communities both in England and overseas. Yet Christina chooses to put herself under St. Albans. The reason for that choice, as presented in the *Life*, is worth dwelling on: it was because the body of Alban, whom she loved more than any other saint, rested there; and because her first spiritual counsellor, the hermit Roger, formerly a monk at St. Albans, was buried there. This decision ultimately leads Christina to the final, great, spiritual relationship of her life, with Abbot Geoffrey

---

* I am indebted to the participants at the 2017 Gender and Medieval Studies conference for their feedback on an earlier version of this chapter. I would also like to thank the editors of this volume for their very helpful suggestions. The phrase 'leprous nuns' in the title reproduces the somewhat sensational term used by the 19th-century historians who catalogued the documents relating to St. Mary de Pré. A more appropriate – and arguably less stigmatizing – description might be 'nuns with leprosy'.

[1] The author's identity as a monk of St. Albans seems in little doubt. Most recently, K. Bugyis has identified him as Robert de Gorron: 'The author of the Life of Christina of Markyate: the case for Robert de Gorron (d. 1166)', *Jour. Eccles. History*, lxviii (2017), 719–46. For more on the composition and dating of the *Life*, see R. Koopmans, 'The conclusion of Christina of Markyate's *Vita*', *Jour. Eccles. History*, li (2000), 663–98.

[2] 'that she had placed her affection there' (*The Life of Christina of Markyate*, ed. and trans. C. H. Talbot (Oxford, 1987), pp. 38–9).

[3] Talbot, *Life of Christina*, pp. 124–6.

P. Byrne, 'Making space for leprous nuns: Matthew Paris and the foundation of St. Mary de Pré, St. Albans', in *Gender in medieval places, spaces and thresholds*, ed. V. Blud, D. Heath and E. Klafter (2018), pp. 45–60.

de Gorron. All these are well-known and well-explored elements in the *Life*, which is itself a well-explored text by the standards of much medieval hagiography. Christina is connected to the abbey not merely by admiration for its famous and saintly sons: she is also drawn to its physical edifice. Christina's loyalty lies where her spiritual exemplars lie buried.

This chapter is not about Christina of Markyate: it is about holy men and holy women at St. Albans and their connection to the sacred and monumental space of the abbey. It is about how, in particular, abbatial probity and 'spiritual masculinity' could be assessed in terms of how one added to or took away from the abbey. For the author of the *Life* (whoever he was), the detail of a scratched sign on a door enhanced the abbey's reputation and spiritual standing. For Matthew Paris, writing a century later at St. Albans, the building of a hospital for female sufferers of leprosy, represented everything that threatened to undo the abbey's institutional pre-eminence.

St. Albans and Christina of Markyate have a push–pull relationship. The *Life* and the St. Albans Psalter seemingly draw them together;[4] emphasizing (even exaggerating) the closeness, the linkages between the physical edifice of the abbey, its abbots, its monks and former-monks-turned-hermits, and Christina as a holy woman. By contrast, Matthew Paris had very little concern for Christina; his history of the abbey from its foundation by King Offa, the *Gesta Abbatum*, finds much room to examine the minutiae of abbatial achievement and abbatial negligence, but clears no such space for her. The passages in the *Gesta Abbatum* describing Christina's life are later interpolations.[5] Yet Matthew does present the life of Geoffrey de Gorron, and at some length. One is struck by the immediate difference in perspective: to read the *Life of Christina*, Geoffrey's relationship with Christina shaped his life as much as it did hers – the holy woman recalled Geoffrey from arrogance and reshaped him into a fit spiritual leader. The *Gesta Abbatum*, however, reckons Geoffrey's life on an entirely different calculus: assessing it according to the contributions he made (physical and financial) to St. Albans. We are told how Geoffrey increased the allowance of the abbey kitchen and secured for it a supply of cheeses and eels; the grants he made for the ornamentation of the church and the funding of repairs; his provisions for the infirmary; his construction of a guest hall and queen's quarters; and, most importantly of all, his decision to commission a feretory and shrine for St. Alban.[6]

---

[4] On the connection between Christina and the Psalter, and the difficulties of unpacking that relationship, see K. Gerry, 'Cult and codex: Alexis, Christina and the Saint Albans Psalter', in *Der Albani-Psalter: Gottesfurcht & Leidenschaft/The St. Albans Psalter: Piety and Passion* (Hildesheim, 2013), pp. 61–87.

[5] *Gesta Abbatum Monasterii Sancti Albani*, ed. H. T. Riley (Rolls Series, xxviii, 3 vols., 1867). Hereafter cited as *GA*. This is *GA*, i. 96–105; Cf. *GA*, i. 127, i. 387. This may simply signify that Matthew Paris found little of interest in Christina; it may alternatively suggest that mid 13th-century St. Albans much preferred to develop the lucrative cult of Amphibalus than to tend the legacy of Christina.

This is the way in which Matthew Paris measures all his abbots: by the lands they obtain, lose, or win back for the abbey; the churches they build or provide for; the way in which they drain the abbey's coffers or make repairs. Boundaries, foundations and building projects: this is the substance of the long history of St. Albans, as presented by Matthew Paris. Into this landscape, and this text, enter the sisters ('leprous nuns') of St. Mary de Pré, a small *leprosarium* founded by St. Albans in the late twelfth century. In one sense, for Matthew Paris, those sisters are more important than Christina of Markyate (though they remain nameless *mulieres leprosas*), for they make it into his history of the abbey. The house was a small foundation, and did not last long as a leper hospital. However, considering Matthew's treatment of those nuns can open up the relationship between the landscape, the built environment and constructions of gender. Reflecting on the role of construction and edification in Matthew's vision of abbatial masculinity may also suggest one reason why he had so little interest in Christina of Markyate, a woman who did not build or contribute to the fabric of the abbey. Christina's spirituality cannot be assessed in the same way that Matthew Paris sizes up the deeds of his abbots; and if it cannot be measured, it is hardly worthy of inclusion.

Bones and bona fides

It is necessary first to get to grips with the *Gesta Abbatum*, a complex text, the finer details of which still await closer study.[7] Though a thirteenth-century text, in some senses the *Gesta* conforms to the standard model of a twelfth-century monastic history – assertively setting out the long-standing rights of the abbey, its relics, privileges and liberties. Matthew's contribution to the *Gesta* runs from 793 to 1255; it was continued in the early fourteenth century by William Rishanger and a couple of less distinguished annalists, and ultimately taken up by the last 'great' historian of the abbey of St. Albans, Thomas Walsingham, who brings the text down to 1390, with a further continuation to 1394.[8]

---

[6] *GA*, i. 72–96.

[7] British Library, Cotton MS. Nero D I.

[8] For Walsingham, see A. Gransden, *Historical Writing in England, 2:* c.*1307 to the Early Sixteenth Century* (1982), pp. 118–56; and more generally, J. G. Clark, 'Thomas Walsingham reconsidered: books and learning at late-medieval St. Albans', *Speculum*, lxxvii (2002), 832–60.

The complexity derives primarily from a question of Matthew's source material. On the first page of the Cotton manuscript, Matthew notes that he utilized an 'ancient roll' (*rotulus*) of Bartholomew the Clerk, the servant of Adam the Cellarer of St. Albans (d. *c.*1180) in writing the *Gesta*. Such a roll is no longer extant. Mark Hagger has recently argued that, particularly for the period *c.*1060–1170, Bartholomew's 'roll' largely provided Matthew with the structure and content of his text. The detailed description of the abbey's immediate post-conquest travails and disputes with Ely and Lincoln dominate the *Gesta* because they had dominated Bartholomew's account. Hagger's view that the records for these years were shaped in response to the legal and political exigencies of a late twelfth-century world, not a mid thirteenth-century one, is convincing. But the extent to which Matthew added to and redrafted the roll is open to question – the process of weaving a historical *gesta* from what may have been an 'administrative' document. Elusive, too, is an understanding of how Matthew shaped his pre-conquest material, for the *Gesta* goes back to the legendary founding of St. Albans by Offa of Mercia.[9]

Whatever was in Bartholomew's roll, Matthew Paris fitted and adapted it to his ends, making it conform to his own style.[10] If Bartholomew's roll had served a largely pragmatic function, drawn up for use in administrative and jurisdictional disputes, then Matthew Paris's version of the *Gesta* serves a rather more expansive purpose. Rather than just a repository of statutes, decisions, possessions and rights of the abbey, an institutional history.[11] He is teaching forgetful monks of how St. Albans has come to be, what it has gained and how easily it might all be lost.

In the 'gains' column for the abbey stands the leper hospital of St. Mary de Pré, founded by the abbey in the early 1190s, situated between Watling Street and the River Ver, dedicated to the Virgin.[12] St. Mary de

---

[9] Cf. M. Hagger, 'The *Gesta Abbatum Monasterii Sancti Albani*: litigation and history at St. Albans', *Hist. Res.*, lxxxi (2008), 373–89, at pp. 396–7. For a view which grants more to Matthew's efforts, see R. Reader, 'Matthew Paris and Anglo-Saxon England: a thirteenth-century vision of the distant past' (unpublished University of Durham Ph.D. thesis, 1994). R. Vaughan's view, *Matthew Paris* (Cambridge, 1958), p. 184, is that Matthew used at least one other source in addition to the roll when writing the *Gesta*.

[10] See further the comments of Reader, 'Matthew Paris and Anglo-Saxon England', pp. 87–8.

[11] Vaughan, *Matthew Paris*, pp. 182–9; cf. B. Weiler, 'Matthew Paris on the writing of history', *Jour. Medieval History*, xxxv (2009), 254–78.

[12] See W. Page, 'The history of the monastery of St. Mary de Pré', *Transactions of the St. Albans & Hertfordshire Architectural and Archaeological Society* (1895–6), pp. 8–18. As concerns dating, the *Gesta* often telescopes events and does not provide a rigorous chronology: the founding charter for the abbey dates to 1194.

Pré is not unlike many small English *leprosaria* from this period: located on a major thoroughfare, making it easier to collect donations and alms from travellers and passers-by.[13] According to Matthew it scratched out a poor living. Initially it contained only the afflicted, though relatively soon after its foundation St. Mary came to house both female lepers and nuns, functioning both as a hospital and as a church.[14] During the fourteenth century, it was subject to the reforming efforts of a series of abbots, leading to it being formally designated as a priory of nuns under Benedictine rule, its relationship with the abbey coming to more closely resemble that of other cells. St. Mary de Pré is considerably better documented for this later phase of its existence,[15] and it is this documentation on which we are reliant, for no archaeological work has been done on the site. Given that St. Mary de Pré was an unremarkable institution by the standards of English *leprosaria*, and has left almost no physical trace, it is reasonable to ask why we should bother with this house at all. Why pay it disproportionate attention? My answer must be: because Matthew Paris does, too.

It is not obvious from the name, but the foundation of St. Mary de Pré was intimately tied to one of the most significant discoveries in the abbey's medieval history: the *inventio* of the relics of Saint Amphibalus at Redbourn, just outside St. Albans.[16] Amphibalus was the name given to the priest who had converted Alban to Christianity, and who had escaped when Alban had taken his place and gone to martyrdom – only to subsequently be captured and martyred himself. The *inventio* is briefly described in the *Gesta Abbatum*, and the subject of a longer description in the *Chronica Majora*, to which Matthew refers readers of the *Gesta*.[17] This was a moment of rejoicing, not purely for the discovery of a new saint (and one both potent in miracles and potentially lucrative), but also for the fact that the manner of the discovery of Amphibalus served to underscore the existing saintly reputation of Alban.[18] In 1178, in the time of Abbot Simon, a man called Robert Mercer received a vision of Alban. Following the vision of the saint, he was led to Redbourn, a place a few miles north of St. Albans. Robert began digging there, and discovered the remains of Amphibalus and some of his (unnamed) companions.[19] This was a cause of great celebration, so much so that when the remains of Amphibalus were being brought to St. Albans, the monks of the abbey carried the relics of Alban out onto the road to meet them and accompanied Amphibalus back to the abbey.[20] It is easy here to see the text and the construction efforts of the abbots of St. Albans' working in tandem: just as the feretory and shrine of Alban to build up the physical presence of the saint in the abbey, jewel-by-jewel and brick-by-brick,[21] so too does the *Gesta* work to establish, beyond question, where St. Albans abbey sits in the centre of a holy landscape.

---

[13] The authoritative treatment of the subject is now C. Rawcliffe, *Leprosy in Medieval England* (Woodbridge, 2006). See esp. p. 5 and pp. 333–4.

[14] Relatively soon after its foundation, St. Mary de Pré outgrew Abbot Warin's plan for a house of 13 sisters, becoming a larger and more complex structure. By 1255, a 'prioress' is mentioned in the records. The 13th-century transformation is discussed in M. Still, *The Abbot and the Rule: Religious Life at St. Albans, 1290–1349* (Aldershot, 2002), pp. 156–61. In this sense, St. Mary de Pré stands in contrast to the house of enclosed nuns at Sopwell, established by St. Albans in 1140, which had a much more clearly defined relationship with the abbots.

[15] Cf. W. Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum* (6 vols., 1846 reprint), iii. 354–62.

[16] For the associations between St. Mary and lepers, see Rawcliffe, *Leprosy in Medieval England*, pp. 119–23.

[17] *GA*, i. 192–3.

It is Amphibalus who brings us to St. Mary de Pré – quite literally. In the early 1190s, during the rule of the next abbot, Warin, Amphibalus himself appeared in a vision to a man from the nearby settlement of Walden. Amphibalus's instructions were that the place where his relics had met those of St. Alban were to be honoured; the man was to go to Abbot Warin and instruct him to build something 'worthy of veneration' (*condigna veneratio*).[22] There was no doubt regarding the veracity of the vision, confirmed by other signs and a holy light. Thus, in that place, Warin decided to build a house for leprous nuns. On the account of the *Gesta*, the building and establishment proceeded extremely rapidly.[23]

Prima facie, one might expect the *Gesta* to present this as a triumph: an act of great charity towards the most pitiable in medieval society, and a foundation undertaken rapidly under the instruction of two great (and local) saints.[24] On a first reading then, this was a very fitting foundation.

---

[18] In the *Gesta*, this is a further proof that Alban's relics lie in St. Albans and not Ely. For this dispute, see *GA*, i. 34–6.

[19] For a further account of the discovery and the 12th-century politics surrounding it, see W. Levison, 'St. Alban and St. Albans', *Antiquity*, xv (1941), 337–59. Matthew's familiarity with Amphibalus is evident from his Anglo-Norman adaptation of William of St. Alban's *Passio Sancti Albani*, as *La Vie de Seint Auban*. William's text considerably expanded the role of Amphibalus in the legend, and Matthew, in turn, enlarged William's account. J. Wogan-Browne, T. S. Fenster, T. O'Donnell and M. Lamont, *The Life of Saint Alban by Matthew Paris with The Passion of Saint Alban by William of St. Albans and Studies of the Manuscript* (Tempe, Ariz., 2010).

[20] *GA*, i. 189; i. 192–3.

[21] E.g. *GA*, i. 83.

[22] *GA*, i. 200.

[23] Warin's charter for the foundation is included at *GA*, i. 202–4.

[24] The choice to found a hospital may also be linked to the fact that Warin had studied medicine at Salerno, alongside his brother Matthew: *GA*, i. 194.

Matthew leaves little doubt that Amphibalus did appear to the man of Walden, and that his vision was genuine. The fact that the foundation was for women is not explicitly discussed in the text, but is probably explained by the fact that St. Julian's, the *leprosarium* founded by Abbot Geoffrey *c.*1140, could provide for male sufferers of the disease.[25] This makes it rather puzzling that Matthew should then denounce the foundation of St. Mary's as a reprehensible mistake on the part of Abbot Warin. Indeed, it is the part of Warin's abbacy which Matthew repeatedly returns to as demonstrating Warin's unfitness for abbatial office. The foundation is criticized in its own *capitulum*; it is also mentioned by name when Matthew gives a final verdict on Warin's abbacy.[26]

This is all the more striking when set within the context of late twelfth- and thirteenth-century chronicles and hagiographies, where the founding of hospitals for lepers is not only understood as a particularly charitable act, but frequently emphasized as such. Interacting with lepers (let alone providing a hospital for them) was easily written up as an act of piety.[27] This was the case in the late twelfth century, when the house was established, and still the case in the thirteenth century: for example, Richard Poore, bishop of Salisbury, set out an ordinance for a house of leprous women at Maiden Bradley in 1228.[28] In hagiography, part of the early thirteenth-century case for the sanctity of Hugh of Lincoln was his humility and great charity in kissing a leper, in imitation of St. Martin.[29] One could pile up examples, both in England and more widely across Europe.[30] Close to home, and in a similar context, *The of Battle Abbey* shows how interaction with lepers might be used by a canny chronicler to take the edge off the arrogance so often associated with high episcopal office.[31] The *Chronicle* provides an instructive contrast here: written in the 1170s, it praises Walter de Lucy – abbot in the 1160s – for ministering to lepers. Yet Matthew deliberately avoids the topos which so many of his contemporaries relished when composing their works, and does not incorporate it into his history.

---

[25] Matthew notes that for reasons of propriety, St. Mary de Pré was set at a distance from St. Julian's; he implies that before the foundation of St. Mary, St. Julian's had permitted the mixing of male and female lepers (*GA,* i. 202). In the *Chronica Majora*, Matthew also notes that two women were among the first to be cured at Redbourn after the discovery of Amphibalus (*Chronica majora*, ed. H. R. Luard (Rolls Series, lvii, 7 vols., 1872–81), ii. 305).

[26] *GA,* i. 125.

[27] Rawcliffe, *Leprosy in Medieval England*, pp. 61–4; 144–9.

[28] *English Episcopal Acta, xix: Salisbury 1217–28*, ed. B. Kemp (Oxford, 2000), no. 319.

[29] See Gerald of Wales, *Vita S. Hugonis*, ed. J. F. Dimmock (Rolls Series, xxi, 1877), D.1, ch.8, p. 107.

[30] Cf. J. Orlemanski, 'How to kiss a leper', *Postmedieval*, iii (2012), 142–57.

[31] *The of Battle Abbey*, ed. and trans. E. Searle (Oxford, 1980), pp. 260–1.

Matthew does not wish Warin's behaviour to be mistaken for an act of spiritual goodness – for Warin did not act well in founding St. Mary de Pré. This is all the more puzzling because earlier in the *Gesta Abbatum*, Geoffrey de Gorron has received fulsome praise for his founding of the leper house of St. Julian.[32] The *Gesta*'s commentary approves of Geoffrey's action, adding that the foundation was done rightly, honouring the soul of the abbey's founder, Offa, the abbots Paul and Richard, and representing a repayment of spiritual debts. For Geoffrey, it was as much a prayer for his own soul as a grant of alms.[33] To put it baldly: if Geoffrey and Warin both performed the same action, why does Geoffrey garner praise and Warin only censure? It would be unwise to dismiss this as mere caprice or inconsistency on Matthew's part.

First, Matthew tells us, it would have been a praiseworthy thing to establish such a church, resounding to Warin's praise before God and men, if he had endowed it out of his own (familial) wealth.[34] Instead, that wealth came from St. Albans; and St. Mary de Pré was to be supported by alms and corrodies from the abbey and other donors, rather than by income from rents or land. By contrast, St. Julian's (the abbey's hospital for male lepers, which had been a mixed house of men and women until the foundation of St. Mary de Pré) was much better provided for, and seems to have been relatively prosperous.[35] Certainly St. Mary de Pré was never a rich house, and seems to have sought additional assistance from the abbey on a number of occasions.[36] Moreover, its ambiguous status in the thirteenth century – neither entirely a hospital nor entirely an enclosed nunnery – may have added to Matthew's unease about its purpose and worth. In the judgment of many, Matthew adds, its foundation was not an act of mercy (*eleemosyna*), but an act of mercilessness (*ineleemosyna*); not alms-giving, but its opposite. The decision to build came from the absence of consideration on Warin's part.

This explanation is more or less straightforward – but it does not quite square the circle. Amphibalus had commanded something be built. In many ways, the 'case' for Warin building a leper house was stronger than for Geoffrey, as it was seemingly sanctioned by Amphibalus. This is not purely about the material costs of endowing and maintaining a *leprosarium*

---

[32] *GA*, i. 77.

[33] *GA*, i. 78.

[34] *GA*, i. 205.

[35] See P. Richards, *The Medieval Leper and his Northern Heirs* (Cambridge, 1977), esp. pp. 28–30 for the standard of living at St. Julian's.

[36] Many 'suburban' *leprosaria* were also supported by alms from local donors and travellers. King John was a considerable patron of St. Mary de Pré; but we can only speculate about other smaller benefactors.

(though that is certainly a part of it); it is also a matter of spiritual leadership. The drain on the abbey's coffers is not enough to explain what was 'wrong' with St. Mary de Pré. This is a point which Matthew himself makes – in a roundabout fashion.

We should avoid a characterization of Matthew Paris as a monastic chronicler who cares solely for the substance and embellishment of his own abbey, and the glory of St. Albans. It is (as ever) more complicated than that. At the beginning of the *Gesta*, Matthew mounted a powerful defence of the cost of holy but expensive foundations. When the abbey itself was first built, Matthew notes, King Offa was condemned for excess and prodigality, for diminishing the royal dignity by giving away his wealth. Yet Offa's resolve was never shaken by these criticisms, because he knew that just as Christ had founded his church on St. Peter, so St. Albans was founded on another martyr.[37] Nothing is too much, or too lavish, where Alban is concerned. Similarly, Abbot Geoffrey is praised for his decision to sell some of the material he had assembled to use in the construction of the shrine of Alban, and giving the proceeds to the poor, for his gift embodied the scriptural principle 'quod uni ex minimis meis fecistis, mihi fecistis'.[38] Equally, however, the *Gesta* makes it clear that donations and gifts are to be clearly weighed up: not all giving is virtuous or right. Leofric, the tenth abbot,[39] was criticized for giving away property to the poor which should have been used for public worship.[40] How, then, does Warin fit into this pattern?

Let us now praise famous (wo)men

To explain why Matthew takes such a different tack to his contemporaries who praise abbatial and episcopal care for lepers (who turn expenditure into virtue) – we need to examine further what he has to say about building – both in physical and spiritual terms. Matthew took the time to dwell upon the construction (and edification) of the church of St. Albans. This is not only evident in the detailed records of the *Gesta*, but also from the fact that Matthew drew images of the shrine of Alban, which served to illustrate his *Vie de Seint Auban* (between *c.*1230 and *c.*1240).[41]

---

[37] *GA*, i. 9.

[38] *GA*, i. 82–3 (Matthew XV: 40).

[39] Cf. Reader, 'Matthew Paris and Anglo-Saxon England', pp. 111–19, who argues that the figure named 'Leofric' in fact represents the historical abbot Alfric II.

[40] *GA*, i. 30.

[41] See M. Biddle, 'Remembering St. Alban: the site of the shrine and the discovery of the 12th-century Purbeck marble shrine table', in *Alban and St. Albans: Roman and Medieval Architecture, Art and Archaeology*, ed. M. Henig and P. Lindley (Leeds, 2004), pp. 124–61.

The account of Warin and St. Mary de Pré continues and develops themes evident in the narrative of the *Gesta* from the very start. Warin stands as one in a long line of abbots criticized for failing to add to, or preserve, the physical structures of St. Albans. The first abbot failed to secure the bones of Offa;[42] Abbot Paul in the eleventh century is similarly castigated for failing to translate Offa's remains into the newly built church, and for 'losing' the memory of where the earliest abbots were buried by destroying their tombs. This undermines and even disrupts the abbey's connection with the sanctified past, losing sight of the way in which religious community, abbots and physical landscape are all tied together.[43] Such actions are singled out in the final 'weighing up' of abbatial lives as particular moments of negligence. In short: one primary test of spiritual leadership is what an abbot does with the 'material' he is provided with.

This leads us to Warin.[44] Warin had the buildings at St. Mary de Pré constructed so quickly, the *Gesta* notes, that no-one could make the criticism that 'he began to build, but was not able to finish'. Here, Matthew invokes Luke XIV: 30 – a passage in which Christ warns against laying the foundations of a work that one is not able to complete. In the context of the *Gesta*, Matthew occasionally resorts to biblical passages to signal approval (or disapproval) of abbatial actions. For example, criticizing Abbot Leofric for giving away the jewels intended for worship to the poor, the *Gesta* invokes Matthew XVI: 11, Christ's reminder that 'the poor will always be with us', to explain why this was not an appropriate action.[45] Ostensibly, the selection of Luke XIV seems to suggest endorsement of Warin's foundation. But, as the *Gesta* develops its account of St. Mary de Pre, it becomes clear that this scriptural passage should be read as a subtle ridiculing of Warin's actions. Warin 'finished' the job at St. Mary de Pré in terms of building work, but not in terms of providing for it in a sustainable way; nor indeed did he – in his rush to build a hospital – adequately contemplate what Amphibalus had requested.

The implication behind Matthew's quotation of Luke XIV: 30 becomes more readily apparent when read in light of the most common medieval glosses on the passage. In scripture, Christ explains to his would-be followers that they should know the cost of being a disciple before they follow him. It is much like planning to build a tower: before laying the foundation, you must calculate whether you can afford to finish it. The most familiar medieval glosses on Luke expanded on this interpretation. According to Gregory the Great and Augustine, to be a good Christian, one must first begin with careful consideration of the great difficulties of that task. Gregory, in particular, stresses that true humility is only proceeded by careful consideration (*per studium considerationis*).[46] One can see why this passage might have appealed to Matthew Paris – and not just for the obvious metaphor of construction. It forms an implicit rebuke to those who set about to do good works ostentatiously and publicly, without first making the proper inner and spiritual preparations. This accords only too well with his criticisms of Warin. The speed at which the house at St. Mary de Pré was established was no demonstration of how easy it would be to preserve and maintain. Warin was not thinking in terms of institutional longevity. Indeed, this is a point seemingly demonstrated by the fact that St. Mary de Pré keeps returning to the narrative even after Warin's death.

---

[42] *GA*, i. 7.

[43] *GA*, i. 62.

[44] It may be significant that Hagger – examining the British Library manuscript of the *Gesta* – thinks that the life of Warin may be the point where Matthew begins writing without the aid of Bartholomew's text: p. 374, n. 4.

[45] *GA*, i. 30.

Negligence, counsel and spiritual authority

As each successive abbot goes the way of all flesh, the *Gesta* enumerates and assesses their respective negligences. Warin is far from the only abbot to have his actions unpicked, but in Warin's case, 'negligentia' does not simply mean laxity or omissions. Many other abbots give too much away, allow land to slip from their grasp: but Warin's leadership was altogether more oppressive. Warin was follower of his own will, who would heed no counsel; he refused to hear friendly correction.[47] Quoting Proverbs III: 5, Matthew explains that Warin did not heed the warning 'lean not on your own understanding', but preferred his own way in everything.[48] The failures of his rule were such that Warin, along with his brother, Matthew, the prior, sought unquestioned authority in the abbey. They suppressed or drove out senior and noble monks, and appointed juniors to the most important positions. By the end of his rule no-one remained who dared speak out against his tyranny.[49] Warin listened to those who flattered him, not his monks.[50]

---

[46] Gregory the Great, *Homiliae in Evangelia*, ed. R. Etaix (C.C.S.L., cxli, Turnhout, 1999), xxxvii. 6, p. 352; Augustine, *Quaestiones Evangeliorum*, ed. A. Mutzenbecher, (C.C.S.L., xlivb, Turnhout, 1980), II. xxi, pp. 71–2; an interpretation preserved in the *Glossa ordinaria*, PL. 114.309D–310B.

[47] *GA*, i. 215.

[48] *GA*, i. 215.

It is matters of counsel which bring us to the issue of gender. The female identity of the sisters of St. Mary de Pré, is, I would suggest, not particularly significant for Matthew's narrative. Although the topic of Matthew Paris and gender has not yet been the subject of sustained research (in part due to the vastness of his corpus), Rebecca Reader has made an initial survey, offering some suggestive preliminary proposals.[51] Her verdict is that Matthew does not have particular interest either in praising holy women or in damning wicked ones. The 'misogyny' of Matthew's writing does not go beyond repeating some of the standard tropes of classical and medieval literature. The *Gesta Abbatum* lends support to this view: when mentioning St. Mary de Pré, the text has very little to say about the women of the foundation – Matthew is far more concerned with its physical existence and maintenance, and the persons of the abbots who are obliged to tend it. Instead, St. Mary de Pré may be more revealing when it comes to abbatial manhood. Reader suggests that one of Matthew's strategies is to label certain admirable qualities as 'male', and to associate less positive characteristics with 'female' behaviour.[52] Certainly, in Matthew's view, one particularly 'male' quality is counsel – both the ability to give good counsel, but equally a willingness to take counsel and act accordingly.[53] That counsel – rather than a love of one's own charity – is required in spiritual leaders may also be suggested by the comments Matthew makes in his hagiography of Edward the Confessor. There the devout king is praised for heeding counsel when he forebears from taking a pilgrimage, something dear to his heart, knowing that his first duty is to his kingdom.[54]

---

[49] *GA*, i. 205–6. The implicit irony here, of course, is that the *Life* of Christina of Markyate criticizes the unreformed Geoffrey de Gorron for the same vice, haughtiness, arrogance and refusal to take counsel (Talbot, *Life of Christina*, pp. 134–6).

[50] *GA*, i. 198.

[51] R. Reader, 'Matthew Paris and women', *Thirteenth Century England VIII*, ed. M. Prestwich, R. Britnell and R. Frame (Woodbridge, 1997), pp. 153–9.

[52] Reader's argument is that Matthew's views on women are subtler and more complex than a standard, misogynistic narrative of female corruption. When writing history, Matthew works to re-describe the inadequacies of some of his male subjects as feminine qualities, and presents able women as demonstrating masculine capacities. When dealing with the legendary past, Matthew presents caricatures: 'wicked queens' take on the crimes of kings, exculpating male rulers. However, when it comes to his female contemporaries, Matthew's approach is more nuanced, an attitude which may be the result of his own engagement with the education of high-status laywomen.

[53] Reader, 'Matthew Paris and women', pp. 155–6; cf. *Chronica Majora*, v. 354.

[54] *La Estoire de Seint Aedward le Rei*, ed. M. R. James (Oxford, 1920), ll. 1574–84. Matthew's text is a reworking and remodelling of several earlier lives. On the text, see

Matthew's emphasis on the necessity of counsel provides us with further insight into Warin and St. Mary de Pré. Implicit in Matthew's account of the foundation of the hospital is the suggestion that, *c.*1190, the question of how St. Albans abbey would respond to the instructions of Amphibalus ought to have been the subject of communal discussion. Indeed, one idea that Matthew may be hinting at is that a leper house was the wrong type of construction altogether. Central to this matter is the issue of how Abbot Warin decided to interpret the words of Amphibalus, and how Warin interpreted the injunction to construct something fitting, something that would honour the saint. A meagre house of leprous women, hastily endowed and insufficiently provided for, was not it. Yet perhaps it seemed otherwise in 1190: Warin might have recalled the foundation of St. Julian's by Geoffrey, and seen a way to emulate the work of previous abbots through his own act of charitable foundation. Warin could have hoped for praise, not censure, from posterity, particularly if, by founding a house for female lepers, he also improved St. Julian's by separating men and women, ending the scandalous practice of providing for them together in a single hospital.

Matthew's charge in the *Gesta* is not that Warin neglected Amphibalus more generally, for his time in office saw a splendid new shrine created for the saint.[55] But, at St. Mary de Pré, failing to heed the concerns of his monks, Warin established something that was not right for the place, time or the saint. It was a misreading of divine instructions; the monks of St. Albans would have told him this, had he cared to listen to them.[56]

Warin's actions in determining what was appropriate to build should be set against the activities of William of Trumpington, abbot 1217–35, during whose rule Matthew entered the abbey. Within Matthew's own time at St. Albans – and certainly during the time when he was writing the *Gesta* – William of Trumpington was embarking on building the profile of Amphibalus, raising him almost to equal prominence with Alban in the life of the community. This included creating for Amphibalus his own shrine, and moving his remains to a more central position within the church: an added effect of this may well have been increased revenue from the increased

---

P. Binski, 'Reflections on *La estoire de Seint Aedward le Rei*: hagiography and kingship in thirteenth-century England', *Jour. Medieval History*, xvi (1990), 333–50, discussing at length the positive portrayal of the interaction between ruler and magnates. More generally, on Matthew's hagiographical endeavours: C. Hahn, 'Proper behaviour for knights and kings: the hagiography of Matthew Paris, monk of St. Albans', *Haskins Society Journal*, ii (1990), 237–48.

[55] GA, i. 205–6.

[56] GA, i. 215.

flow of pilgrims.[57] Matthew presents William as a successful builder, who understood both what the saint wanted and what the abbey required.

William of Trumpington did yet more for Amphibalus. At Redbourn, the place where his relics had originally been discovered, a cell of St. Albans had been founded (during the rule of either abbot Simon or Warin).[58] Yet Redbourn makes a more substantive appearance in the *Gesta* several decades later, when the 'cell' becomes a true priory, dedicated to Amphibalus and rebuilt on the decision of Abbot William. This is worthy of an admiring notice.[59] While none of the abbots in the *Gesta Abbatum* escape criticism entirely, William receives a lengthy and largely laudatory memorial. A saint may lead you to the holy space, Matthew seems to imply, but the test of a good abbot is what you construct, and how you go about constructing it.

Despite the fact that rival churches and interfering bishops loom large as opponents in the *Gesta Abbatum*, the really dangerous characters in Matthew Paris's text are the abbots. Most of the time it is the *internal* politics of the abbey which put St. Albans in danger, threatening to shrink its physical and spiritual significance. The *Gesta Abbatum* – from the very beginning – is a narrative of how the physical structures of St. Albans and its community survive despite being continually set back by incapable or wicked abbots who care more for themselves than the foundation. Those who, like Warin, undertake their abbacies lacking that spirit of humility and ear for counsel are bound to fail.

It would not do to make too much of the significance of St. Mary de Pré in the *Gesta Abbatum*. Rather than being an interpretive key that unlocks the text, it is an episode which draws out the themes and ideas Matthew has laid down right from the start – namely the connection between construction and good abbatial conduct. We might, perhaps, discern in it some disdain on Matthew's part for a 'fashion' for picking on lepers as vehicles for public display of religious virtue. It might also help us to connect the themes of the *Gesta* to his other works – works which look far beyond the horizons of St. Albans and its locality: to be a good leader, to display the characteristics of male spiritual leadership, is to understand the place of counsel.

If Caroline Walker Bynum saw a new, 'affective' element entering the rules for abbatial conduct in the twelfth century – one which emphasized *caritas* and humanity[60] – we might add a further ingredient to that recipe.

---

[57] F. McCulloch, 'Saints Alban and Amphibalus in the work of Matthew Paris: Dublin, Trinity College MS 177', S*peculum*, lvi (1981), 761–85.

[58] *GA*, i. 211. Still, *Abbot and the Rule*, pp. 136–9, places the foundation in 1195.

[59] *GA*, i. 303–4.

[60] Cf. C. Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley, Calif., 1982).

The ability to take and to heed counsel mattered in the spiritual realm as much as it did in the secular world. The good abbot, as a leader of other spiritual men, must walk a tightrope: disposing without dictating, ordering without oppressing. Matthew Paris's St. Albans is a place filled with sanctity, and a place waiting to be edified – but it is also a space for communal discussion of how that edification is to be achieved.

4. On the threshold? The role of women in Lincolnshire's late medieval parish guilds

Claire Kennan

In February 1389, the Guild of St. John the Baptist at Baston, Lincolnshire, submitted its return to chancery in accordance with the writ of November 1388 requiring all parish guilds to send details of their foundation, ordinances, lands and property as part of a national enquiry.[1] Among the usual guild regulations requiring attendance at funerals and participation in the annual feast were some rather more distinctive ones relating to female members. On the Feast of St. John the Baptist, the sisters of the guild were expected to dance together, under the pain of a fine, and to carry lights during the procession. They were also required to attend vespers and matins on the eve of the feast.[2] Finally, there was a stark warning to any sisters who 'gave in to the evils of the body': they were to be immediately expelled from the guild.[3] The specific mention of female guild members in this document shows active female participation in the parish guild and there are other similar incidences of this from across the county.

Despite never holding official position in them, the women of Lincolnshire's late medieval parish guilds could join independently and take part in the guild's annual patronal feast, processions, meetings, burial services and, sometimes, elections of officials. This suggests that women were not so much on the threshold of parish guild life, as an integral part of it. Female members were able to participate fully in nearly all aspects of guild life, sharing in the physical spaces and spiritual undertakings of these associations. This chapter will explore the roles of women in Lincolnshire's guilds, the separate rules and regulations to which women

---

[1] *Calendar of Close Rolls: Richard II, vol. 3, A.D. 1385–89* (1921), p. 624; J. A. Tuck, 'The Cambridge parliament, 1388', *Eng. Hist. Rev.*, lxxvii (1969), 225–43, at p. 237; W. R. Jones, 'English religious brotherhoods and medieval lay piety: the inquiry of 1388–9', *The Historian,* xxxvi (1974), 646–59, at pp. 646–7.

[2] T.N.A., C 47/39/76; A. Prescott, 'Men and women in the guild returns', in *Gender and Fraternal Orders in Europe 1300–2000*, ed. M. F. Cross (2010), pp. 30–51, at p. 44.

[3] T.N.A., C 47/39/76.

C. Kennan, 'On the threshold? The role of women in Lincolnshire's late medieval parish guilds', in *Gender in medieval places, spaces and thresholds*, ed. V. Blud, D. Heath and E. Klafter (2018), pp. 61–74.

were sometimes subject and the opportunities membership afforded them as active participants in these associations which crossed the boundaries of everyday life.

The absence of records containing membership lists for the majority of parish guilds makes a statistical approach challenging. Lincolnshire, however, provides a particularly rich case study for female participation in parish guilds because of the wide range of surviving documentary evidence. From the enquiry of 1389 there are 124 returns for the county out of a national total of just over 500, making it the second largest surviving collection in the country.[4] Counties such as Lincolnshire, Norfolk and Cambridgeshire seem to be particularly well represented in the surviving guild returns.[5] However, the survival of this evidence also poses some problems. Only twenty-three counties are represented in the documents, with no returns surviving for the counties of Cumberland, Westmorland, Devon or Cornwall, while some counties are only represented by a single return. In Sussex, only one guild is recorded in 1389; however, fifty-seven guilds are noted in wills from the county.[6] Similarly, no guild returns survive for Cornwall, but no fewer than 140 guilds have been found in surviving evidence for the county during the late medieval period.[7] In Norfolk, there were at least 1,229 parish guilds in 445 of the county's 800 parishes and Gervase Rosser has given a tentative estimate of 30,000 guilds operating in England as a whole between 1350 and 1550.[8] This suggests that the surviving evidence does not fully represent the prevalence of parish guilds in late medieval England and that, in fact, parish guilds were much more widespread than the surviving evidence implies.

For most counties, the evidence for late medieval parish guilds is fragmentary, with little surviving between the 1389 guild enquiry and the later chantry certificates and documents of the guilds' dissolution.[9] However, in Lincolnshire, there is also a good range of records for this intermediary period, including detailed guild account books for the Louth's Holy Trinity and Blessed Virgin Mary Guilds, surviving membership lists for the Corpus Christi Guild at Boston, the Act Book from St. Katherine's Guild at Stamford and numerous wills from across the county.[10] The survival of this additional material helps to illuminate the activities and membership of Lincolnshire's parish guilds in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Finally, there are also the documents of the guilds' dissolution, in which a total of twenty-four parish guilds from the county are represented in the records from the Court of Augmentations.[11] This range of surviving evidence, allows for a relatively detailed study of Lincolnshire's parish guilds between *c.*1389 and 1549 and the part women played in these associations.

---

[4] T.N.A., C 47/39/74-C47/41/186.

[5] S. Badham, *Seeking Salvation: Commemorating the Dead in the Late Medieval English Parish* (Donington, 2015), p. 165.

[6] Badham, *Seeking Salvation*, p. 165.

[7] J. Mattingly, 'The medieval parish guilds of Cornwall', *Jour. Royal Institution of Cornwall*, x (1989), 290–329, p. 299; J. Mattingly, 'Going-a-riding: Cornwall's late medieval guilds revisited', *Jour. Royal Institution of Cornwall* (2005), 78–103.

[8] K. Farnhill, *Guilds and the Parish Community in Late Medieval East Anglia* c.*1470–1550* (York, 2001), pp. 30–31; Badham, *Seeking Salvation*, p. 166; G. Rosser, *The Art of Solidarity in the Middle Ages: Guilds in England 1250–1550* (Oxford, 2015), p. 50.

[9] Badham, *Seeking Salvation*, p. 165.

Parish guilds appealed to a broad range of individuals, making them integrated in social status as well as by sex.[12] Unlike many other late medieval institutions, women could join their local parish guild on more or less equal terms to men, not just as wives or widows.[13] Late medieval parish guilds are most simply defined as groups of men and women who came together under the patronage of a particular saint, or holy symbol, in order to support traditional religious ceremonies[14]. Although certainly distinct from the parish, guilds were not in competition or conflict with parochial organizations; instead, in many parishes, the guilds were instrumental in supporting the parish's activities.[15] An important example of this can be seen at Louth, where both the Holy Trinity and Blessed Virgin Mary Guilds were essential in funding the rebuilding of St. James's church spire between 1500 and 1515.[16] Parish guilds were characteristic of both urban and rural settings, making them as universal as the parish, county or manor.[17] For these reasons, they are often seen as one of the most important expressions of late medieval piety.[18] This makes them an especially fascinating area of study because they give a valuable insight into the priorities and beliefs of ordinary men and women from the late fourteenth century until their dissolution in the mid sixteenth century.

---

[10] Lincolnshire Archives, Louth St. James PAR 7/2, 'St. James' Churchwardens Accounts, Louth, Book II'; Misc. Book I Monson MS. LXXVII, 'Gild B. Marie de Louth 1473–1504'; Misc. Book II Monson MS. LXXVIII, 'Gilde Ste. Trinitatis de Louth 1489–1523'; *The First Churchwardens' Book of Louth,* ed. R. C. Dudding (Oxford, 1941); *The Act Book of St. Katherine's Guild, Stamford, 1480–1534,* ed. A. Rogers (Bury St. Edmunds, 2011).

[11] T.N.A., E 301/33, 'Court of Augmentations for Lincolnshire, 1548'.

[12] B. A. Hanawalt, 'Keepers of the lights: late medieval English parish guilds', *Jour. Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, xiv (1984), 21–38, p. 25.

[13] G. Harriss, *Shaping the Nation: England 1360–1461* (Oxford, 2005), p. 294; H. Leyser, *Medieval Women: a Social History of Women in England 450–1500* (1996), p. 225.

[14] Badham, *Seeking Salvation*, p. 164; C. M. Barron, 'The parish fraternities of medieval London', in *The Church in Pre-Reformation Society: Essays in Honour of F. R. H. Du Boulay,* ed. C. M. Barron and C. Harper-Bill (Woodbridge, 1985), pp. 13–38, at p. 13.

[15] Badham, *Seeking Salvation*, p. 164; G. Rosser, 'Communities of parish and guild in the late middle ages', in *Parish, Church and People: Local Studies in Lay Religion 1350–1750*, ed. S. Wright (1988), pp. 29–55, *at* p. 41.

[16] For examples, see *First Churchwardens' Book of Louth,* pp. 33, 46, 58, 72, 135.

[17] Prescott, 'Men and women in the guild returns', pp. 35–6.

[18] Jones, 'English religious brotherhoods', p. 646.

The central purposes of parish guilds were to provide all their members with a proper funeral and to regularly perform masses for the souls of the deceased.[19] They also held regular meetings and staged an annual feast to honour their patron saint.[20] In many towns these meetings and feasts often took place in the guildhall with the sisters of the guild present, highlighting how female members shared the guilds' physical spaces. Guild activities and responsibilities could extend much further into the lives of their communities. For example, they often carried out repairs to their parish churches and provided charity for destitute members.[21] Many guilds and fraternities also played an active role in the political and social life of their communities, including through the regulation of the behaviour of their members or through association with the ruling elite of the town.[22] As parish guilds developed, they assumed extra functions and it was from this type of parish or religious guild that trade-orientated fraternities later emerged.[23] Accordingly, late medieval parish guilds can be clearly characterized as combining traditional religious activities with wider social, economic and sometimes political aims.[24] Guilds essentially encouraged a 'continual oscillation' between the spiritual development of individual members and the social aims of the group, which benefited both their male and female members.[25]

Membership of a parish guild provided a certain amount of credit and status in local society.[26] Guilds offered their members, including women, several means to identify and establish their own personal role within the wider community. First, guild membership offered the individual an opportunity to negotiate his or her way into secular society through engagement with others and taking on a variety of socially responsible roles to prepare him or her to undertake further duties and find his or her place in the local community. [27] Rosser likened this to the theory presented by the sociologist Erving Goffman in his work *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life*, in which he stated that human lives are 'a succession of acts, in which we try out various roles and learn to play our parts'.[28] Late medieval parish guilds allowed their members to do exactly this. They offered a safe environment in which individuals could try out a variety of roles which were 'defined in relation to age, gender, profession or moral responsibility within the local community'.[29] Therefore, guild membership offered much more than simply burial services and intercessory masses. It provided members with the opportunity to develop their individual identities in relation to the town and parish in which they lived, and to extend their own personal and professional networks. Importantly, to a certain degree, these benefits were also available to women.

---

[19] E. Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1440–1580* (1992), p. 143; B. Kümin, *The Shaping of a Community: the Rise and Reformation of the English Parish* c.*1400–1560* (Aldershot, 1996), p. 149; Rosser, 'Communities of parish and guild', pp. 32–3; Harriss, *Shaping the Nation*, p. 293.

[20] See G. Rosser, 'Going to the fraternity feast: commensality and social relations in late medieval England', *Jour. British Studies*, xxxiii (1994), 430–46.

[21] Hanawalt, 'Keepers of the lights', p. 21; Kümin*, Shaping of a Community*, p. 149.

[22] See B. R. McRee, 'Religious guilds and regulation of behaviour', in *People, Politics and Community in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. J. Rosenthal and C. Richmond (Gloucester, 1987), pp. 108–122.

[23] Prescott, 'Men and women in the guild returns', p. 36.

[24] Rosser, *Art of Solidarity,* p. 3.

[25] Rosser, *Art of Solidarity,* p. 76.

[26] Rosser, *Art of Solidarity,* p. 87.

In some parishes, single-sex guilds did develop in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Katherine French has noted how parochial records show that activities carried out in single-sex groups became a more permanent part of the expression of communal religious practices. In some communities, men and women formed separate parish guilds that supported side altars or chapels dedicated to a variety of saints.[30] The growth of single-sex guilds marks an observable change in local religion and is a clear manifestation of the gendering of religious activity.[31] However, for Lincolnshire there is very little evidence of such a development. In fact, the only evidence for a female-only parish guild in the county is at Long Sutton in 1528 and even here the dedication and any further details of the guild are unclear.[32] Female-only parish guilds are predominantly, but not exclusively, found in the southern and western counties of England, in both rural and urban communities. The greatest surviving evidence for these guilds comes from Devon and Cornwall. Whereas this may reflect regional differences, it is also likely that it reflects the survival of the sources.[33] Although there is no further evidence of female-only guilds in Lincolnshire it is clear that women were involved in the county's mixed-sex parish guilds and that this is where we must look for evidence of their involvement.

---

[27] G. Rosser, 'Finding oneself in a medieval fraternity: individual and collective identities in the English guilds', in *Medieval Confraternities in European Towns,* ed. M. Escher-Aspner (Oxford, 2009), pp. 29–46, at p. 34.

[28] Rosser, 'Finding oneself', p. 34.

[29] Rosser, 'Finding oneself', pp. 34–5.

[30] K. French, 'Maidens' light and wives' stores: women's parish guilds in late medieval England', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, xxix (1998), 399–425, at p. 404.

[31] French, 'Maidens' light and wives' stores', p. 404.

[32] French, 'Maidens' light and wives' stores', p. 421.

[33] French, 'Maidens' light and wives' stores', p. 405.

Mixed sex membership in such bodies appears to have been extremely common; the majority of 1389 guild returns refer to both 'brothers and sisters' and later guild documents follow this pattern too. In Lincolnshire, all but a handful of the 1389 guild returns mention both male and female members.[34] However, as the work of Jan Gerchow has highlighted, the mention, or silence, on the part of the guilds in regard to their female membership cannot be taken at face value. Gerchow concluded that the information contained within the 1389 returns has been filtered through several bureaucratic processes which has resulted in some documents containing almost identical information.[35] A similar issue arises from the account books of the Holy Trinity and Blessed Virgin Mary guilds at Louth, which survive for the years 1473–1504 and 1489–1523 respectively. In both sets of accounts 'brothers' and 'sisters' are mentioned in general terms of guild activity, income and expenditure. However, the same formula is used throughout both sets of accounts, usually written by the same scribe, with John Cawod and John Cawod the Younger being the most notable, which means that the addition or omission of the term 'sisters' in the documents does not necessarily mean that female members were participating or absent at any given point.[36] Therefore, a simple count of the number of documents which mention female guild members is unsatisfactory as a guide to the extent of their involvement in these bodies. Thus, it is necessary to concentrate on details which are 'explicitly gendered' or which name female members of the guild.[37]

The surviving register for the Corpus Christi Guild at Boston provides further insights into female membership and offers an indication as to how many new sisters were admitted to the guild for the period 1335–1543. During this time 1,362 new members were admitted to the guild and of these, 260 were women. Peaks in the admission of new female members occurred in 1430–9, when twenty-eight were registered and again in 1390–99 when twenty-five new female members joined the guild. The low points of entry for female members coincided with the plague years, with only two new female members joining the guild for the period 1350–9 and only one for the period 1360–9.[38] Looking at the admissions list for the Boston Corpus Christi Guild, on average, twenty per cent of guild members were women between 1335 and 1543. However, seventy-five per cent of these women were specified to be the wives of members.[39] Despite this, it does not mean that the sisters of the Corpus Christi Guild were any less active than their male counterparts as all members were entitled to attend guild feasts, meetings, processions and funerals.

---

[34] A. Kissane, *Civic Community in Late Medieval Lincoln: Urban Society and Economy in the Age of the Black Death 1289–1409* (Woodbridge, 2017), pp. 308–9; T.N.A., C 47/40/148; T.N.A., C 47/41/160.

[35] J. Gerchow, 'Guilds and fourteenth-century bureaucracy: the case of 1388–9', *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, xl (1996), 109–48.

[36] Prescott, 'Men and women in the guild returns', pp. 43–4.

[37] Prescott, 'Men and women in the guild returns', pp. 43–4.

In Stamford, women featured very strongly in St. Katherine's Guild, with the exception of the guild's early, formative years. By 1504, fifteen members out of a total of 112 were women, meaning that female members made up just over thirteen per cent of the guild's overall membership. These women were members in their own right and not as 'the wife of' male members.[40] The Guild of St. John the Baptist in Kirton-in-Lindsey also had female members who joined in their own right. Although exact figures cannot be given as membership lists do not survive, there are examples of individual women joining the guild, including Alice Qwettlocke, who paid a membership fee of *2s* in 1475–6 for herself without a male relative.[41] For Louth, both of the town's leading guilds frequently mention sisters in their documents.[42] These references usually come in the standard form of a statement referring to the guild as a corporate body and its 'brothers and sisters'. Although, of course, this does not actually confirm female participation at any point, it does show that women were able to join the guild if they wished to. Later mentions of sisters who died, for example Agnes Lollard and Margaret Norman, members of the Holy Trinity Guild in 1516–17, do however confirm female membership.[43]

In other cases, the involvement of women in a parish guild can be deduced from the rates of subscriptions in which marital status was considered. For example, in some cases single women and married women paid different entry fees.[44] It could be argued that a significant driving force behind the involvement of women in parish guilds was financial. Members would have wanted their families to enjoy the spiritual and material benefits of guild membership and in order to ensure that the guilds' funds were not depleted, female members too had to make a contribution to enable them to take part.[45] In Lincolnshire, there appears to be little evidence for this differentiation in membership fees. Neither the Blessed Virgin Mary Guild nor the Holy Trinity Guild at Louth appear to have distinguished between entry or annual fees paid by men and women.[46] In Stamford, all members of the St. Katherine's Guild, including women, were expected to pay the same annual subscription fee in four instalments of 20*d*.[47] The 'waxshott' was another annual payment made by members to maintain the lights in the chapel of St. Katherine. This was 4*d* for a husband and wife, or 2*d* for single members.[48] However, despite equal membership fees or annual payments, a sense of gendered hierarchy still remained frequently apparent in the guilds.[49]

---

[38] British Library, Harley MS. 4795, 'Register of the Guild of Corpus Christi, Boston'.

[39] Brit. Libr., Harley MS. 4795; H. Fleming, 'The guild of Corpus Christi', in *The Guilds in Boston,* ed. W. M. Ormrod (Boston, 1993), pp. 35–44, p. 38.

[40] *Act Book of St. Katherine's Guild, Stamford,* p. 10.

[41] L.A., PAR/7/1, 'Kirton in Lindsey Church Wardens' Account Books and Guild Accounts 1489–1523', fo. 14.

[42] LA, Monson MS. LXXVII; Monson MS. LXXVIII.

[43] LA, Monson MS. LXXVIII, fo. 197.

[44] Prescott, 'Men and women in the guild returns', pp. 44–5.

Although some documents reveal the involvement of women in the foundation of the guild, or in the election of its serving officers, they were never able to hold office themselves. The guild of St. Lawrence in Lincoln stated that their provisions were the words of God and given with the counsel of the brothers and sisters of the guild. This suggests that women were involved in deciding the ordinances, but the possibility that they were ever involved in upholding these ordinances as guild officers seems unlikely.[50] The return for the Corpus Christi Guild in Yarborough emphasizes that both men and women were involved in the discussions which led to the establishment of the guild in 1358. This document also states explicitly that the brothers and sisters both had to attend the annual meeting on the Feast of Corpus Christi and together elect a supervisor.[51] However, the supervisor, more commonly referred to as the alderman, who would manage the goods and chattels of the guild, was selected from and advised by the brothers alone. The Guild of the Resurrection at St. Martin's church in Lincoln was founded by 'thirteen brothers and sisters', and men and women paid equal subscriptions. Only the men, however, were entitled to attend the morning speech, and the brothers elected the officials of the guild, who were also always men.[52] Restrictions such as these were evident not only in urban areas; for example, the Blessed Virgin Mary Guild at St. Andrew's church in Harlaxton stated that only men could be elected as officials and could take part in arbitration.[53] For both the Blessed Virgin Mary and Holy Trinity Guilds in Louth it would also appear that wheras the sisters of both guilds could attend meetings and be involved in the election of their alderman, they could not be elected themselves or be involved in the management of the guild and its activities.[54]

---

[45] Prescott, 'Men and women in the guild returns', pp. 45–6.

[46] LA, Monson MS. LXXVII, fo. 9v.

[47] *Act Book of St. Katherine's Guild, Stamford*, p. 13.

[48] *Act Book of St. Katherine's Guild, Stamford,* p. 16.

[49] Prescott, 'Men and women in the guild returns', pp. 45–6.

[50] T.N.A., C 47/40/142; Kissane, *Civic Community*, pp. 280–1.

[51] Prescott, 'Men and women in the guild returns', p. 42.

[52] T.N.A., C 47/40/144; Prescott, 'Men and women in the guild returns', p. 45.

Katherine French has commented that women's roles within parish guilds, or in the wider parish community 'reflected both their status and position in the family and society'.[55] Often they would be involved in activities which drew upon their previous experiences. For example, individually women would mend altar clothes, wash and repair vestments and clean the church before Easter and Christmas.[56] There is some evidence of this in Louth; throughout the Blessed Virgin Mary Guild accounts the care and cleaning of the altar cloth in the chapel were the responsibility of one of the guild sisters, Margaret Whyte, who was paid 12*d* for performing this task each year.[57] Alice Hyghton was employed by the Holy Trinity Guild in the late 1490s and paid for her work on three separate occasions. However, the nature of this work was never revealed.[58] Beyond this there is very little mention of any other female-specific tasks. This could possibly be the result of the clerical practice in the town which did not deem it necessary to make a note of female contributions, particularly if they were unpaid. Or, it may simply be the result of assumptions that the female guild members knew their responsibilities and would carry these out regardless. Although female members were able to participate in the majority of guild activities alongside the guilds' male members, there were occasions when they were excluded and there were certain tasks which were deemed to be the duty of the sisters alone.

Another means of assessing female guild membership comes principally in their appearance as 'tenants' of the guild. Priority was often given to guild members when renting out guild-owned property and there are several named female individuals who could, therefore, potentially have been guild members.[59] The surviving guild accounts for the Blessed Virgin Mary and Holy Trinity Guilds in Louth provide some information on female tenants, who were probably also guild members. These women included Agnes Metcalfe, Marian Boston, Alice Tavener, Isabelle Gentyll, Isabella Glayser, Agnes Storser (widow), Joanne Marche (widow), Margaret Netyson (widow), Elizabeth Lowson, Isabella Wyllymson and Margery Grever (widow).[60] It is important to note that the rents these women paid were no different from the other rents charged by the guild. Similarly, the locations of these properties covered a wide area of the town, including some of the town's main thoroughfares, which further suggests that female members were treated on similar terms to male members when it came to renting guild properties. Charitable initiatives were available for female guild tenants as the case of Matilda Skemby highlights. Skemby had clearly fallen on hard times and the Blessed Virgin Mary Guild decided to pay the rent for her tenement in Westgate, at a rate of 4*s* per annum, from 1492 onwards.[61] In 1497–8 the guild decided to pay the rent for the remainder of her life.[62] If we use named female tenants as a possible indicator of female guild membership it would seem that even in smaller towns guild membership was popular among women. It also indicates that female tenants were sharing the space of guild-dominated areas of the town.

---

[53] T.N.A., C 47/40/124; Prescott, 'Men and women in the guild returns', p. 45.

[54] LA, Monson MS. LXXVII; Monson MS. LXXVIII.

[55] French, 'Maidens' light and wives' stores', pp. 401–2; V. Bainbridge, *Gilds in the Medieval Countryside: Social and Religious Change* c.*1350–1558* (Woodbridge, 1996), p. 50.

[56] Bainbridge, *Gilds in the Medieval Countryside*, p. 50.

[57] LA, Monson MS. LXXVII, fos. 6, 16, 24, 30, 48v, 58v, 72v, 105v, 120, 131, 143, 156, 213v, 230, 243v, 271, 285.

[58] LA, Monson MS. LXXVIII, fos. 6, 18, 19.

[59] Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, p. 143.

Testamentary evidence provides a further insight into female participation in parish guilds. One particular source of evidence for this can be found in the obits performed for female members who, with their husbands, left generous sums to Lincolnshire guilds in their wills. In the late fifteenth century, women named in the obits performed by Louth's two leading guilds included Agnes Burr, Isabel Westmels, Agnes Langholm and Joanne Williamson. At least one of these women, Isabel Westmels, was a gentlewoman.[63] These women are mentioned by name in the guild accounts, rather than simply as 'the wife of', which seems to imply that they were members of the guild in their own right. Other forms of bequest can be used to indicate female guild membership. For example, monetary gifts left to the Boston Blessed Virgin Mary Guild came from Dame Joan Grymescrofte, a nun at Stainfield in 1516 and Alice Dynely, a vowess at Whitkirk in Leeds (1527).[64] In Boston, Janette Lamkyn (widow) named a total of fourteen guilds in her will when she died in 1508.[65] Although problematic in themselves in many ways, wills and testamentary evidence can provide an indication as to whether or not women were members of parish guilds, and how important these associations were to them in terms of commemoration and remembrance.

---

[60] LA, Monson MS. LXXVII, fos. 4, 30, 43; Monson MS. LXXVIII, fos. 1v, 20.

[61] LA, Monson MS. LXXVII, fos. 176v, 183v, 192, 219v.

[62] LA, Monson MS. LXXVII, fo. 225v.

[63] Her husband is listed as 'gentleman' in the contemporary sources.

[64] B. Bramer, 'The guild of the Blessed Virgin Mary', in Ormrod, *Guilds in Boston*, pp. 45–56, at p. 48.

[65] S. Badham, 'He loved the guild: the religious guilds associated with St. Botolph's Church, Boston', in *'The Beste and Fayrest of al Lincolnshire': the Church of St. Botolph, Boston,*

Disciplinary clauses specifically concerning women are another means of measuring female participation in parish guilds.[66] When men and women entered a guild they all had to swear an oath and promise to uphold a strict code of regulations; this was part of assuming the shared identity of the guild.[67] These regulations often included proper behaviour at guild functions, including obedience to the alderman, 'attentive silence during meetings, and sober comportment during ceremonies'.[68] However, some rules did extend into the lives of guild members and were explicitly gendered. For example, 'men were warned not to wander the streets at night or play games of chance, while women were admonished to avoid the company of suspicious men'.[69] Adultery and gambling were two of the most popular targets of guild regulations.[70] After prohibiting criminal activities and any rebellion against the guild's leaders, the Guild of St. John the Baptist at Baston then declared that any woman guilty of adultery or promiscuous behaviour would be immediately expelled. This provision, it should be noted, only applied to the female members.[71] This evidence shows that although women could not hold official positions in the guild or be involved in its management, they were actively involved in its other activities. Female members, therefore, were visible representatives of the guilds during feasts and processions. They also shared the social and spiritual spaces in which these activities took place with their male counterparts, including guildhalls, side chapels or altars and parish churches. It would appear that any regulations solely for the 'fairer sex' were to ensure that female members did nothing to damage the guilds' reputations.

It is interesting to note that by the early sixteenth century the membership of Lincolnshire's guilds included some of the most important women in England. For example, Lady Margaret Beaufort and Cecily, Lady Welles were both members of the Stamford St. Katherine's Guild. Blanche, duchess of Lancaster and Alicia, countess of Lincoln had been members of

---

Lincolnshire and its Medieval Monuments, ed. S. Badham and P. Cockerham (Oxford, 2012), pp. 49–72, at p. 56.

[66] Prescott, 'Men and women in the guild returns', p. 45.

[67] Rosser, *Art of Solidarity*, p. 66.

[68] McRee, 'Religious guilds and regulation of behaviour', pp. 108–9.

[69] McRee, 'Religious guilds and regulation of behaviour', pp. 108–9.

[70] McRee, 'Religious guilds and regulation of behaviour', pp. 108–9.

[71] McRee, 'Religious guilds and regulation of behaviour', p. 112; T.N.A., C 47/39/76.

the Corpus Christi Guild in Boston and were still remembered after their deaths.[72] The standing of some of these guilds had been enhanced during the fifteenth century by the spiritual benefits they were able to grant their members, in particular the one hundred days remission from Purgatory the St. Mary's Guild in Boston was able to offer its members who attended mass with music in the chapel.[73] In 1451 Nicholas V allowed for retrospective absolution for existing and new members who joined the guild over the next five years, a privilege renewed in 1464 and 1475.[74] Undoubtedly these benefits would have appealed to a broad membership, including some of the wealthiest and most influential women in England. However, women of local importance were also members of Lincolnshire's guilds. For example, Matilda Mareflete, mistress of the school in Boston, was a member of the Boston Corpus Christi Guild.[75] Ordinary working women also feature among the guild's members, including Agnes, servant of Simon do Wode.[76] We can therefore conclude that female membership in Lincolnshire's parish guilds covered almost the entire social spectrum, from servants to the nobility, suggesting that those women who had the means to pay their entry fee and annual dues were not left on the margins of parish guild life.[77]

The evidence from Lincolnshire strongly suggests that women were active members in parish guilds. But what can this tell us about the role of women in the community more generally? Historians such as Alice Clark have placed particular emphasis on the role of women in guilds to demonstrate an improvement in the economic status of women after the Black Death.[78] Clark argues that prior to the Industrial Revolution men and women had worked together closely, stating that; 'there can be no doubt that the sisters shared fully in the social and religious life of the guilds; it is also perfectly clear that the wife was regarded by the guild or company as her husband's partner'.[79] This would suggest that post-Black Death, women were able to engage fully in local economic life through the membership of their parish guild. However, this argument does not take into consideration the actual nature of parish guilds, which were first and foremost voluntary religious associations that only later developed further craft or trade regulatory roles in the town and parish.

---

[72] *Records of Early English Drama: Lincolnshire,* ed. James Stokes (2 vols., 2009), i. 454–5.

[73] Badham, 'He loved the guild', p. 60.

[74] Badham, *Seeking Salvation*, p. 169.

[75] *R.E.E.D.: Lincolnshire,* i, 455.

[76] *R.E.E.D.: Lincolnshire,* i, 455.

[77] *R.E.E.D.: Lincolnshire,* i, 455.

[78] For further arguments regarding a 'golden age' and increasing diversity in female employment, see C. M. Barron 'The "golden age" of women in medieval London', *Reading Medieval Studies*, xv (1989), 35–58 and P. J. P. Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life Cycle in a Medieval Economy: York and Yorkshire* c.*1300–1520* (Oxford, 1992).

[79] Prescott, 'Men and women in the guild returns', p. 33; A. Clark, *Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century* (1919), p. 183.

More recently, historians have questioned Clark's thesis and in particular her claims that guild membership was a clear indicator of female economic and social status.[80] Judith Bennett has made a point of arguing against the idea of increased economic opportunities for women and has instead offered a narrative of continuity.[81] Margorie McIntosh has also replaced Clark's vision with a much more nuanced view.[82] Clark's seminal study, written nearly a century ago, reflected the assumptions of the times in which it was written. A clear distinction was then made between craft guilds, which regulated a trade in a particular town, and religious guilds, which were brought into being to support particular religious observances and charitable benefactions. It is this distinction which underpins the work of such scholars as Toulmin Smith and Westlake. However, recent scholarship has argued that such strict demarcations did not exist in the middle ages. As Elspeth Veale has observed:

> The distinction drawn between fraternity – an association which concerned itself particularly with religious ceremonies, especially rites of burial, and with social activities which its members enjoyed – and organized mistery may well have been drawn too sharply.[83]

This is strikingly clear in the evidence itself. As early as 1389 the far-reaching influence and multi-faceted roles of parish guilds were recognized. Although ultimately conservative in their religious functions, parish guilds crossed neighbourhood and parish boundaries; they also crossed the boundaries between the sacred and the secular with their influence extending into the local economy, local politics and the social networks and hierarchies of the towns and villages in which they were located.[84] It is possible that the multi-faceted nature of these associations, which did not have a defined legal status, was what originally caused concern among members of Richard II's government.

---

[80] Prescott, 'Men and women in the guild returns', p. 33.

[81] Prescott, 'Men and women in the guild returns', p. 33; J. M. Bennett, *Ale, Beer and Brewsters in England: Women's Work in a Changing World 1300–1600* (Oxford, 1996), p. 7.

[82] See M. Keniston McIntosh, *Working Women in English Society, 1300–1620* (Cambridge, 2005).

[83] E. Veale, 'The Great Twelve: mistery and fraternity in thirteenth-century London', *Hist. Res.*, lxiv (1991), 237–63, at p. 263; Prescott, 'Men and women in the guild returns', pp. 34–5.

[84] J. Middleton-Stewart, *Inward Purity and Outward Splendour: Death and Remembrance in the Deanery of Dunwich, Suffolk, 1370–1547* (Woodbridge, 2001), p. 150.

However, ‘there has been a constant temptation, from the time of Alice Clark onwards, to assume that references to female membership of medieval guilds and fraternities are straightforward indicators of economic status’.[85] The case of the 1389 returns and the later guild account books and documents for Lincolnshire are a reminder that such assumptions create many difficulties. The main problem is that guilds were not straightforward craft or trade regulatory bodies in the way that the scholars of Clark’s generation understood them. The craft guilds developed from parish guilds, and the social and cultural aspects of these guilds remained as important as their economic functions. Although women may have enjoyed the religious or social benefits of the guild, they were probably excluded from any meaningful involvement in its later trade activities or management.[86] However, what female membership in parish guilds does afford us is an insight into women’s involvement in extra devotional activities and their participation in community events through their association with the parish guild.

In conclusion, it would seem that women were able to be involved in parish guilds, in their meetings, funerals, feasts, processions and charitable work within the community. However, they were strictly excluded from taking up office as alderman, dean, or clerk and certainly had sterner rules regulating their behaviour outside the confines of guild life. It can therefore be suggested that while they were not included in parish guilds on a completely equal footing with the brothers of these associations, they were able to participate in the majority of guild practices without difficulty. So, although parish guilds themselves may have been on the threshold between the sacred and the secular, the parish and the town, their female members were certainly not.

---

[85] Prescott, ‘Men and women in the guild returns’, p. 47.

[86] Prescott, ‘Men and women in the guild returns’, p. 47.

5. Beyond the sea: medieval mystic space and early modern convents in exile*

Victoria Blud

One of the central tensions from which mystic writing emerges is the mystic's negotiation of the world she wishes to transcend. The space of mystic writing is both within and without, a threshold between this world and the next; the space proper to the mystic is always in some sense beyond what is knowable. As Michel de Certeau memorably put it, 'He or she is mystic who cannot stop walking and, with the certainty of what is lacking, knows of every place and object that it is *not that*'; in the pursuit of the mystic destination, '[p]laces are exceeded, passed, lost behind it. It makes one go further, elsewhere'.[1] The notion of space frequently structures the study of mysticism, whether this dimension is viewed as physical or metaphysical: the world of the mystic and her place within it is at once a condition on her union with God and the condition upon which she might attempt to express this union. Carmel Bendon Davis thus looked at mysticism and space as a philosophical continuum, considering the mystical experience as an 'embodied' one that occurs in what she called

> *mystical space*. This is the multifaceted space of mystical experience and its subsequent representations (social and textual). It incorporates all aspects of the mystics' life conditions: their personal experience of God; their physical environment; social influences, past and present; the influences of the communities in which they lived and wrote; their religious enculturation; and, additionally, their texts and the language of those texts.[2]

This chapter looks at medieval English mysticism in the post-Reformation period, specifically the Benedictine nuns of Cambrai. This community

---

* I am grateful to the British Academy for supporting the early research that contributed to this chapter. My thanks also go to Diane Heath and Einat Klafter for their generous feedback and suggestions.

[1] M. de Certeau, *The Mystic Fable: Volume One – the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, trans. M. B. Smith (Chicago, Ill., 1992), p. 299.

[2] C. Davis, *Mysticism and Space* (Washington, D.C., 2008), pp. 5–6 (original emphasis).

V. Blud, 'Beyond the sea: medieval mystic space and early modern convents in exile', in *Gender in medieval places, spaces and thresholds*, ed. V. Blud, D. Heath and E. Klafter (2018), pp. 75–90.

holds particular interest for medievalists for their part in the dissemination and publication of Julian of Norwich's writings:[3] under the direction of Augustine Baker, they not only read widely in the medieval contemplative tradition but subsequently also nurtured members like Gertrude More, Margaret and Catherine Gascoigne and Barbara Constable, who attracted acclaim in their own right for their spiritual writings.[4] Here, recusant readers and writers invoke many thresholds: between the world of the devotional writer or reader and the world at large; between medieval and early modern; between Catholic and Protestant Europe; between the self and community. Set apart from England, this little island of medieval learning was a port in one storm, but became the eye of another.

The development of the Cambrai community and the contemplative character of their approach to the cloistered life insisted on the continuing usefulness and relevance of medieval mystic texts to those who, seeing their native country leave Catholicism behind, had left England behind in turn. This mode of contemplation also had the effect of re-emphasizing withdrawal from the world, to an even greater extent than the convents in exile were already removed from the spiritual and political ambit of their native land. In its emphasis on the personal connection with God, the Cambrai method also afforded a confessor less influence over his charges. Certainly, in their approach the nuns at Cambrai were not representative of the English Benedictine community more generally, where Ignatian spirituality, emphasizing self-examination and the capacity to find God in all things but also collaboration and regulation, were more often favoured.[5]

---

[3] For the early modern career and early publications of Julian's *Showings,* see J. Summit, 'From Anchorhold to closet: Julian of Norwich in 1670 and the immanence of the past', in *Julian of Norwich's Legacy: Medieval Mysticism and Post-Medieval Reception*, ed. S. Salih and D. N. Baker (Basingstoke, 2009), pp. 29–47; J. Bolton Holloway, *Julian Among the Books: Julian of Norwich's Theological Library* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 2016), pp. 246–88. On the role of early modern Catholic women in preserving medieval devotional and literary works, see J. Summit, *Lost Property: the Woman Writer and English Literary History, 1380–1589* (Chicago, Ill., 2000), pp. 109–62; D. Wallace, 'Nuns', in *Cultural Reformations: Medieval and Renaissance in Literary History*, ed. J. Simpson and B. Cummings (Oxford, 2010), pp. 502–26.

[4] See Gertrude More (CB137), Margaret Gascoigne (CB077), Catherine Gascoigne (CB074), Barbara Constable (CB043) in 'Who Were the Nuns?', Queen Mary University of London <https://wwtn.history.qmul.ac.uk> [accessed 6 Dec. 2017].

[5] The *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius of Loyola (composed 1522–48) were regularly used in the convents and were adapted for a number of different audiences. They comprise exercises and meditations moving through purgative, illuminative and perfective stages; novices would begin with spiritual and emotional preparation before graduating to contemplation and imitation of Christ's life, and eventually exercises for affective association with Christ. See *Ignatius of Loyola: Spiritual Exercises and Selected Works*, ed. and trans. G. E. Ganss

The more individualistic of the nuns' writings and Baker's teachings were called into question for diverging from more conventional Jesuit principles. This chapter therefore considers the nuns along with their medieval literary exemplars as a community that spanned and crossed chronological and topographical boundaries, investigating the influence of medieval mysticism and the opportunities it afforded women who pursued a devotional life that was in many ways anchored to another time and place.

In the post-Tridentine Catholic Church, both monasticism and the mission took on renewed and international significance. In England, the great Catholic families began to send their daughters overseas to new convents, especially in France and the Low Countries, where they awaited the return of Catholicism to their homeland. Some of the earliest were Brigettines from Syon abbey, who relocated to Lisbon in 1594, but within a relatively short period their example was imitated by Benedictines (Brussels, 1599), Augustinians (Louvain, 1609), Poor Clares (Gravelines, 1609), Carmelites (Antwerp, 1618) Franciscans (Brussels, 1619), Sepulchrines (Liège, 1642) and Dominicans (Brussels, 1660).[6] The space of mystic writing was changing as well. This kind of writing always deals with an unattainable space, that of union with the divine – a space that is always at a remove. The classic, idiosyncratic and often reclusive English mystic was now more likely to be cloistered in an order; the complexion of English mysticism took on a different aspect as it was translated to new environments.

The Monastery of Our Lady of Comfort at Cambrai was established in 1623, when a small group of young women from prominent Catholic families crossed over to the Spanish Netherlands from England.[7] The community had been planned with the English Benedictine Congregation from around 1620; on arrival at Douai the novices met with Frances Gawine of the older Benedictine cloister at Brussels, who would guide them in their new vocation. It was in the following year that the fledgling community would gain its most controversial member, when Augustine Baker arrived to serve as the convent's spiritual director. In contrast to the Jesuits who had previously instructed the novices, Baker's methods placed

---

(Mahwah, N.J., 1991). The method focuses on the dialogue between director and exercitant, with a view to equipping directors with the necessary tools to guide their charges. However, as L. Lux-Sterritt observes, 'The Jesuit *Exercises* were devised for the use of men, and of missionaries: nuns were neither'. See 'Clerical guidance and lived spirituality in early modern English convents', in *Spirit, Faith and Church: Women's Experiences in the English-Speaking World, 17th–21st Centuries*, ed. L. Lux-Sterritt and C. Sorin (Newcastle, 2012), pp. 51–78, at p. 67.

[6] For the establishment and eventual repatriation of the English convents in exile, see *English Convents in Exile, 1600–1800,* ed. C. Bowden (6 vols., 2013), vi, p. xvii.

[7] Later Our Lady of Consolation; now Stanbrook abbey, Wass.

remarkable emphasis on the individual's own engagement with spiritual discourses and texts, with the objective of attending to the 'inner' life of contemplative prayer and meditation, rather than imposing what might prove to be merely an 'outer' discipline. This is reflected in his summary of his recommendations to Gertrude More in his account of her life, where he writes that her method relied on 'the exercise of affections, either as her propensity moved her to do by itself, or as she chose herself out of a book, or by custom, or from memory'.[8] A bibliophile who associated with Cotton and Selden, Baker brought with him a great enthusiasm for medieval works and the mystics of the later middle ages, and he encouraged wide reading and active engagement with these works. The textual environment in which the nuns' writings were composed would have included the works of Julian, Bridget of Sweden, Suso, Hilton and Tauler (the latter two favourites of Baker's).[9] As Baker's methods were adopted, the Cambrai house became a close-knit community of readers, writers, patrons, commentators and translators. When some of the Cambrai books were transferred to a sister house, Our Blessed Lady of Good Hope in Paris (1651), the contemporary cataloguer thus listed one set of volumes as having been copied 'the one by Sr Hilda's hand, the other in every bodyes'.[10]

The manuscripts that were taken from the convent at Cambrai after the French Revolution are now preserved in the Archives Départementales du Nord at Lille. This cache of documents offers a window onto contemporary and transtemporal textual relationships in the sisters' engagement with their texts. While the nuns' books reveal wide interests, their fascination with medieval texts and their somewhat unusual reading informs their own writing, revealing the effects of participating in what might be considered a larger 'mystic space' such as that Davis suggested. The remains of the

---

[8] *The Life and Death of Dame Gertrude More*, ed. B. Wekking (Analecta Cartusiana, cxix, no. 19, Salzburg, 2002), p. 36.

[9] For the account of Baker's reading and correspondence with Cotton, see P. Spearitt, 'The survival of mediaeval spirituality among the exiled black monks', *American Benedictine Review*, xxv (1974), 287–316. *Sancta Sophia* or *Holy Wisdom*, the most well-known of Baker's works, has been recently re-edited: *The Sources of Fr. Augustine Baker's 'Sancta Sophia'*, ed. J. Clark (Analecta Cartusiana, cxix, no. 43, 2 vols., Salzburg, 2016).

[10] C. Walker analysed the implications of this collaboration on the part of the nuns in her article 'Spiritual property: the English Benedictine nuns of Cambrai and the dispute over the Baker manuscripts', in *Women, Property and the Letters of the Law in Early Modern England*, ed. N. E. Wright, M. W. Ferguson and A. R. Buck (Toronto, 2004), pp. 237–55. Walker highlighted the strength of Gascoigne's argument that the Baker papers were, like all books in a Benedictine community, held in common and did not belong to any one individual, but also the difficulty the Cambrai convent had to negotiate in order to retain their autonomous spiritual practice: 'What rights did the religious women have to the documents held in their possession, which arguably they had jointly created with Baker?' (p. 239).

Cambrai collection are sparse, and what is in Lille represents much less than is recorded in Cambrai's book lists, copied at the time the convent was vacated during the Revolution.[11] In this are listed multiple works by the convent's own mystic stars – nine copies of Gertrude More's *Spiritual Exercises,* twenty-three copies of Augustine Baker's *Sancta Sophia*, and of course Serenus Cressy's edition of Julian of Norwich's *Shewings* (fifteen copies). One short catalogue note (written in two different hands) in the records of the Paris house offers another insight into the original collection:

> Bookes of F. Baker which I brought with mee to Paris.
> Of Sicknes. Written by Ster Hilda. — — 4to
> [cancellation]
> 2 Parts of the Mission in F. Bakers hand. 80
> [cancellation]
> 2 Parts of the Stay in Ster Hilda's hand. - 80
> Of Confession in my Ladyes hand. — — 80
> Caveats in F. Bakers hand. — —— —— 80
> Five Treatises, in Ster Hilda's hand, unbound — 80
> The Anchor, in Ster Hilda's hand — — — 80
> The two parts of Thalamus Sponsi,
> one by Sr Hilda's hand, ye other in every bodyes
> Our fathers at St. Edmonds have these following
> Conversio forum (imperfect)
> summarie D. H. Doubts
> directions for praier[12]

Like most catalogues, the book lists of the Paris house include various tantalizing phantoms, a liminal library of texts that we know of and which might bear their traces in other works, but which have disappeared. The notes of the librarians preserve a multi-generational commentary as books are mislabelled, renamed and recatalogued. Some books have perhaps been taken out of circulation, as attested by another document headed, 'A Chatilodg of the secrit boakes that our Rd Mo: Pir: is to keepe'.[13]

---

[11] *Catalogue des livres provenant des religieuses angloises de Cambray: Book List of the English Benedictine Nuns of Cambrai* c.*1739*, ed. J. T. Rhodes (Analecta Cartusiana, cxix, no. 42, Salzburg, 2013). Bowden has made an extensive survey of the commonalities and distinctions among the convents in exile with regard to their programmes of reading and writing, and the creation and subsequent fates of their libraries (C. Bowden, 'Building libraries in exile: the English convents and their book collections in the seventeenth century', *British Catholic History*, xxxii (2015), 343–82).

[12] Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine MS. 4058 (loose leaf). See also J. T. Rhodes, 'Augustine Baker's reading lists', *The Downside Review*, cxi (1993), 157–73.

[13] Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine MS. 4058 (loose leaf). On the role of abbesses, their discrimination and influence on the nuns' reading in the convents, see Bowden, 'Building libraries', pp. 350–52.

These 'secret' books – here absent, yet present – include Baker's lives of Gertrude More and Francis Gascoigne (the brother of Abbess Catherine Gascoigne), 'The Booke called ye Apolidg for his wrightings', Baker's treatise on the English mission, other works of his such as *A Stay in All Temptations* and *The Book of Admittance*, and 'The Booke called Secrettum', probably *Secretum sive mysticum*, Baker's tract glossing the *Cloud of Unknowing.* Baker's own youth was spent in spiritual tumult: having 'lost his virtue and his Christian faith in bad company' while at Oxford, he was later reconciled to the Catholic church, prompted by a brush with death while engaged on business.[14] He arrived at Cambrai in 1624 to instruct the nuns in Benedictine contemplative prayer, and More's life and the dissemination of her works thereafter also became tied up with his reputation.

Jenna Lay has argued for the importance of assessing the nuns' work in the light of their independence of Baker as well as the extent to which they were influenced by his approach, using Barbara Constable as her example.[15] A large number of manuscripts is attested in the Cambrai catalogue, though these are not listed individually but rather as a job lot, tagged with the underwhelming description: '839 volumes manuscrits de differents formats (ecriture moderne) presque tous relies en parchemin; peu interessans, et tous sur des objets pieus'.[16] In the Lille collection, there are more texts that bear the marks of the nuns' interactions with their reading matter; these can be fairly brief but still striking glimpses of how these texts became part of their meditations, and inspired them to respond, sometimes with arresting immediacy. In a Lenten sermon, for example, a flyleaf is covered with what look on the one hand like pen trials, but which, on the other hand, consist of the words 'I'm sorry', written over and over in the blank space.[17]

More subtle and frequent are the allusions in the writings of this community that read medieval texts to look both backwards to a former age and forwards to the return of the faith to England. This community has been studied often for its role in the dissemination and publication of Julian of

---

[14] D. Knowles, *The English Mystical Tradition* (1961), p. 154. On Baker's life, writings and teachings, see the essays in *That Mysterious Man: Essays on Augustine Baker with Eighteen Illustrations*, ed. M. Woodward (Abergavenny, 2001); *Dom Augustine Baker, 1575–1641*, ed. G. Scott (Leominster, 2012).

[15] J. Lay, 'An English nun's authority: early modern spiritual controversy and the manuscripts of Barbara Constable', in *Gender, Catholicism and Spirituality*, ed. L. Lux-Sterritt and C. M. Mangion (Basingstoke, 2011), pp. 99–111.

[16] '839 manuscript volumes in different formats (modern writing), almost all bound in parchment; little of interest, and all on pious matters'. The entry notes among these works sermons, theological treatises, saints' lives, epistles, gospels, meditations, prayers, paraphrases, psalms, advice, instruction and ascetic tracts (Rhodes, *Catalogue*, p. 189).

[17] Lille, A.D.N. 20H 13.

Norwich's writings, and certainly she made an impact. Margaret Gascoigne, for example, whose 'loose papers' were edited into a series of soliloquies or *Devotions* by Baker upon her death, drew on Thomas à Kempis, Gertrude of Helfta and Julian in her writing, but Julian was so important to Margaret that on her deathbed, she had a quotation from Julian's *Showings* placed where she could gaze upon it in her last illness:

> She caused one, that was most conversant and familiar with her, to place (written at and underneath the Crucifix, that remained there before her, and which she regarded with her eyes during her sickness and till her death) these holy words that had sometime ben spoken by God to the holie Virgin Julian the ankresse of Norwich, as appeareth by the old manuscript Booke of her Revelations, and with the words our Dame had ever formerlie been much delighted: 'Intend (or attend) to me, I am enough for thee: rejoice in me thy Saviour, and in thy Salvation.' These words (I say) remained before her eyes beneath the Crucifixe till her death.[18]

Since the Council of Trent, enclosure for nuns was now mandatory (reinforcing Boniface VIII's *Periculoso*) and subject to heavy sanctions for violation;[19] it is hardly surprising that the Lille collection hints at further devotion to quasi-anchoritic enclosure. There is an anchoritic ring, for instance, to a poem found in the leaves of a book belonging to Ann Benedict:

> Alone retired in my natiue cell,
> At home within my self, all noyse shut out,
> In silent mourning I resolue to dwell,
> With thoughts of Death, Ile hang my walls about:
> All windows close, Faith shall my Taper be,
> At whose dim flame Ile Hell & Judgment see.[20]

---

[18] Downside abbey MS. Baker 42, pp. 232–34. Quoted in *The Writings of Julian of Norwich*, ed. N. Watson and J. Jenkins (University Park, Penn., 2006), pp. 438–9. On Gascoigne's engagement with Julian and the convent's reception of Gascoigne's devotions, see J. Goodrich, '"Attend to me": Julian of Norwich, Margaret Gascoigne and textual circulation among the Cambrai Benedictines', in *Early Modern English Catholicism: Identity, Memory and Counter-Reformation*, ed. J. E. Kelly and S. Royal (Leiden, 2017), pp. 105–21; G. Gertz, 'Barbara Constable's *Advice for Confessors* and the tradition of medieval holy women', in *The English Convents in Exile, 1600–1800: Communities, Culture and Identity,* ed. C. Bowden and J. E. Kelly (2017), pp. 123–38. See also M. Truran, 'Spirituality: Fr Baker's legacy', in *Lamspringe: an English abbey in Germany, 1643–1803* (York, 2004), pp. 83–96.

[19] For the development of the decrees of enclosure for nuns, see E. M. Makowski, *Canon Law and Cloistered Women: Periculoso and its Commentators, 1298–1545* (Washington, D.C., 1997).

[20] A.D.N., 20H 25. Also edited in D. L. Latz, *Glow-Worm Light: Writings of 17th-Century English Recusant Women from Original MS.* (Salzburg, 1989), p. 70.

With its claustrophobic imagery of a cell with tight-closed windows, in which the speaker contemplates death, the verses recall the strict admonishments of anchoritic guides on the subject of looking through one's windows, and the temptations that begin with the overstimulation of the senses. This particular poem – with its images of darkness and sensory withdrawal – has been linked to the artistic tradition of interpreting John of the Cross's *Dark Night of the Soul* (a work also known to the convent);[21] however, while that work evokes a venturing forth, a journey, with a guide unseen and a lover as the goal, this poem turns its attention inward to the practice of virtue. Though it describes a spiritual ascent, the perspective remains very much shut in, with the speaker striving in subsequent stanzas to make hunger into food, thirst into drink, clothing from dust.

The project of writing and translating also encompassed making English versions of more recent Continental works. Among the survivors from Cambrai, there are excerpts from Tauler (20H 3, 39), Teresa de Avila (20H 38, 39, 48), Blosius (20H 38), Harphius (20H 23, 24, 35), Girolamo Savonarola (20H 17), Ruesbroec (20H 33), St. Gertrude (20H 39) and Thomas à Kempis (20H 39, 48). Jeanne de Cambrai's commentary on the *Song of Songs* was translated as *The building of divine love* by Agnes More (cousin to Gertrude),[22] and the work of Francis de Sales is represented by dozens of printed texts by 1793. Predictably, though, there is a firm attachment in both the printed and handwritten material to the British Isles. The 1793 catalogue has an extensive section devoted to printed historical works, with traditional accounts from the medieval history of the English church, including Josephus, Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica,* and another chronicle of a displaced religious community, Simeon of Durham's *Libellus de exordio*. In the tradition of Catholic historiography the handwritten histories in the collection also draw on the medieval past.[23] The Cambrai writers and copyists accordingly represent a range of windows onto this outside world, including a description of 'S Winefrid's Well called Holy Well in Flintshire North Wales, the most extraordinary & surprising spring perhaps in the world', a short excerpt from Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, and a brief account of a romance entitled 'A challenge brought to K. Arthur from a king of North Wales'.[24]

---

[21] See discussion by C. Koslofsky (referencing P. Choné's analysis), in *Evening's Empire: a History of the Night in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 78–9. Among the Cambrai papers, excerpts from John of the Cross appear in several manuscripts including 20H 31, 38, 39 and 48.

[22] A.D.N. 20H 18.

[23] For instance, A.D.N. 20H 51, which includes a history of England (drawing on Bede), and of Europe and the Holy Land, and 20H 52, a history of the aristocracy of Wales that lists Merlin, Vortigern and Arthur.

So the image that emerges of the community is one of quiet withdrawal and yet close sorority; on a macro level, attachment to the traditions and history of a forsaken homeland juxtaposes both current geographical location and the effort to forget the world. Gertrude More unites some of these conflicted influences and desires. She was one of these nuns in exile, participating in the displaced continuation of English Catholic piety. Born Helen More in 1606, she had an illustrious and somewhat overwhelming lineage – she was the great-great-granddaughter of Sir Thomas More, with whom she is inevitably linked in the contemporary literature. Her father, Cresacre More, had provided financial support for the foundation of the Cambrai convent, and Helen entered Cambrai with two of her cousins, Grace (in religion, Agnes) and Anne; her younger sister Bridget would go on to be prioress of their convent's sister house, Our Blessed Lady of Good Hope in Paris.

Alongside her cousins, Helen professed (as Gertrude) in January 1625. When she entered into religion she was, as she describes herself, 'cheerful, merry and free'.[25] Her first eighteen months were difficult and Baker describes her distress at the spiritual confusion she experienced in trying to reconcile her vocation with her 'defectuositie'.[26] Like others at Cambrai, she was influenced by the wide-ranging medieval mystic tradition in which she was schooled by Baker.[27] Though her writing engages with the apophatic or negative theology of Pseudo-Dionysius and his heirs, More was also particularly fond of the Psalms, Proverbs, the Song of Songs; she was a devotee of St. Augustine, after whose *Confessions* she models her own major work, and Evelyn Underhill declared that it displayed 'the romantic and personal side of mysticism even more perfectly than [that of] St. Teresa'.[28] The metaphors in her meditations are often time-honoured ones (heat and fire, and dryness parched by the divine fountain), but the familiar can also be arresting:

---

[24] A.D.N. 20H 50, 51 (fo. 24v) and 54 respectively.

[25] G. More, 'Apology', in *The Inner Life and Writings of Gertrude More*, ed. B. Weld-Blundell (2 vols., 1910–11), p. 279.

[26] Wekking, *The Life and Death of Dame Gertrude More*, p. 29. For Baker's indebtedness to Blosius in his account of Gertrude More's life, see V. van Hyning, 'Augustine Baker: discerning the "call" and fashioning dead disciples', in *Angels of Light? Sanctity and the Discernment of Spirits in the Early Modern Period*, ed. C. Copeland and J. Machielson (Leiden, 2012), pp. 143–68.

[27] See M. Norman, 'Dame Gertrude More and the English mystical tradition', *Recusant History*, xiii (1976), 196–211; D. L. Latz, 'The mystical poetry of Dame Gertrude More', *Mystics Quarterly*, xvi (1990), 66–82.

[28] E. Underhill, *Mysticism: a Study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness* (1949), p. 88.

> Lett all things praise thee, & lett me in all praise thy diuine Ma^{tie} wth them that loue thee. Behold, fire, ice, snow, thunder, lightning, haile, & the spiritt of stormes do thy will; & yet I in all contradict it, who am capable of thy loue, & am inuited so manie wayes by thee, my God. […] Lett it wholie consume me, that I may be wholy turned into loue, & that nothing else may be desired by me. Lett me be drowned & swallowed vp in that sea of diune loue, in [which] my soule may swimme for all eternity, & neuer more by sinne be seperated from thee.[29]

The reader is reminded vividly that this is a writer who reached her new life after undertaking a sea voyage, and who is separated from familiar scenes by a strait of water. Philip Edwards has suggested that in this period in particular, 'the traditional image of the frail ship venturing into the power of the unpredictable and uncontrollable sea must have become more alive for writers, even if they never went to sea'.[30] Yet More imagines the sea not as a traversible space that separates her from her destination but as the destination itself, the limits to comprehension in which she will become lost and found.

Such maritime images thus draw on earlier exemplars but also reach beyond them. Sebastian Sobecki's study of the sea in medieval insular thought considered the sea as the site of primal fear, as the condition for pilgrimage, as wilderness, as the limit of the world, as purgatory, as spiritual obstacle to be traversed, as symbol of challenge, chaos, or seat of the Devil.[31] As Christopher Daniell noted, it is rather unusual for Christians to drown. In the bible and in saints' lives, the faithful are, indeed, often saved from the waters and borne over them.[32] St. Bridget, who was shipwrecked before she was even born, speaks of the sea in exactly this way, as the storm-tossed waters that the ship of the body must navigate:

> The Son speaks: "Listen, you who long for the harbor after the storms of this world. Whoever is at sea has nothing to fear so long as that person stays there with him who can stop the winds from blowing, who can order any bodily

---

[29] Confession 16, *Fr. Augustine Baker OSB, Confessiones Amantis: the Spiritual Exercises of the most Vertuous and Religious Dame Gertrude More*, ed. J. Clark (Analecta Cartusiana, cxix, no. 27, Salzburg, 2007), pp. 83–4.

[30] P. Edwards, *Sea-mark: the Metaphorical Voyage. Spencer to Milton* (Liverpool, 1997), p. 1.

[31] See S. I. Sobecki, *The Sea and Medieval English literature* (Cambridge, 2008), esp. pp. 25–47. For comparison with seagoing pilgrimage narratives, see E. Bekkhus in this volume, although of course Bekkhus is talking about Irish traditions.

[32] C. Daniell, *Death and Burial in Medieval England, 1066–1550* (1997), p. 71.

> harm to go away and the rocky crags to soften, who can command the storm-winds to lead the ship to a restful harbor."[33]

Elsewhere, Bridget also paints an image of the body as a boat with a bad sailor inside who lets in water until the vessel sinks, or the three kinds of ship in varying states of repair through which men must travel through the seas of the world.[34]

For Julian, meanwhile, the understanding of God's providence is evoked in a vision of a seabed expedition:

> One time my understanding was led downe into the sea grounde, and ther saw I hilles and dales grene, seming as it were mosse begrowen, with wrake and gravel. Then I understode thus: that if a man or woman wher there, under the brode water, and he might have sight of God — so as God is with a man continually — he shoulde be safe in soule and body, and take no harme.[35]

Yet Julian's seascape is a situation that is escaped through God's aid, as opposed to the scene in which the soul melts into divine oneness. More figures water and especially the sensation of drowning and being completely surrounded and submerged in water as the route to God, not to perdition. In her poem *Amor ordinem nescit*, More writes of the wish to 'swim' in divine love, but only until she is 'absorpt' by and can 'melt into' this sea of love; the soul's goal is to drown and not to float.[36] Yearning to 'be swallowed up in the bottomless ocean of all love',[37] she also echoes Tauler, who glosses Psalm 61 – 'deep calls to deep' – as an expression of how 'the human spirit is lost in God's spirit – sunk in the fathomless ocean of the Godhead'.[38]

---

[33] *The Revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden*, trans. D. Searby, ed. B. Morris (4 vols., Oxford, 2006–15), i. 91.

[34] *Revelations of St. Birgitta*, i. 71–3; ii. 166–7.

[35] Watson and Jenkins, *The Writings of Julian of Norwich*, Long Text, ch. 10 (ll. 16–20).

[36] 'O lett me, as the siluer streames
Into the ocean glide,
Melt into that vast sea of loue
Which into thee doth slide!'

In Oxford, MS. Bodleian Rawlinson C. 581, fos. 1–7v, edited in *Confessiones Amantis*, ed. Clark, pp. 1–11, at p. 8.

[37] More, *Writings*, pp. 147–8. 'Fragments: Various Sentences and Sayings of the Same Pious Soul Found Among her Papers'. This phrase is also found in the *Apology* (More, *Writings*, p. 289).

[38] Second sermon for the fifth Sunday after Trinity, 'Fishing in Deep Waters', in *The Sermons and Conferences of John Tauler of the Order of Preachers, surnamed 'The Illuminated Doctor' being his Spiritual Doctrine*, ed. and trans. W. Elliott (Washington, D.C., 1910), pp. 442–7, at p. 447. Baker remarks in his own account of More's life that a soul away from the divine is like a whale in a brook: 'the great creature has not space enough to swim or plunge […] it ever desires the ocean which, for its depth and wideness, is capable of

In More's imagery, unusual in sea metaphors, the depths are the object of desire.

In 1633, Baker departed Cambrai after controversy over his work: Francis Hull, the chaplain, accused him of anti-authoritarian preaching and Baker's writings were investigated for heretical leanings. More and the abbess Catherine Gascoigne wrote in his defence; Baker was cleared but later removed to Douai. However, the Cambrai nuns continued to provoke controversy after Baker's death. In 1655, Claude White, president of the English Benedictine Congregation, demanded that Abbess Catherine Gascoigne release the original Baker manuscripts, accusing the nuns of harbouring 'poysonous, pernicious and diabolicall doctrine'.[39] Though Baker's works had been judged orthodox (by examiners that included White himself), White's insistence brought further troubles to the convent.[40] His proposed censorship, however, only focused on autograph manuscripts, not the works composed by the nuns in this model. Around the same time, Serenus Cressy was preparing Baker's works for print, under the title *Sancta Sophia* (1657).[41]

While the doctrine may not have been diabolical, the community looked beyond Jesuitical methods, and the character of their practice was individualistic to the extent that a nun might even feel enabled to go beyond the supervision of a spiritual director on her deathbed. More's *Apology for Herself and Her Spiritual Guide*, written in defence of Baker's methods, is certainly wary of the methods used by instructors who came before him, remarking, 'They speak with little consideration who say it is enough to

---

containing it and millions of others' (Wekking, *The Life and Death of Dame Gertrude More,* p. 231).

[39] C. Gascoigne to A. Conyers: Oxford, MS. Rawlinson A.36, fo. 45, Bowden, *Convents in Exile*, iii. 289. On the Baker scandal, see C. Walker, *Gender and Politics in Early Modern Europe: English Convents in France and the Low Countries* (2003), pp. 143–7; Walker, 'Spiritual property', in Wright, Ferguson and Buck, *Women, Property and the Letters of the Law*, pp. 237–55; Lay, 'An English nun's authority', pp. 99–114.

[40] In a letter of 3 March 1655, Christina Brent (CB015) confided to Anselm Crowder her wish that 'the affaire of the books rest', so that the strain and practical problems it had brought – including the withholding of permission for novices to profess and thereby endow the convent – might be concluded (Bowden, *Convents in Exile*, iii. 291).

[41] Baker's works were edited by Dom. Justin McCann OSB and, more recently, by J. Clark for the Analecta Cartusiana series. The new editions in particular have renewed interest in the affair that led to Baker's and Hull's removal to Douai, and a certain degree of scepticism about the guileless image of Baker promulgated by the Cambrai community and in Cressy's rather coy editing of *Sancta Sophia.* See D. Lunn, 'Augustine Baker (1575–1641) and the English mystical tradition', *Jour. Eccles. History*, xxvi (1975), 267–77; L. Temple, 'The mysticism of Augustine Baker, OSB: a reconsideration', *Reformation and Renaissance Review*, xix (2017), 213–30.

do what a counsellor adviseth' and saying of the Jesuit insistence on strict obedience that the novice who observes their instructions 'grows but by this into favour with Superiors, and companions, … thinking that if she can please them she dischargeth her duty to God and her obligation of tending to perfection'.[42]

In the section of the Apology relating to confession, More again draws on Tauler, remarking that 'Tauler saith that it is as easy for one that hath an aptness for an internal life, and will be diligent and observe in it, to note, observe, and discern the Divine call within him, as it is for one to distinguish his right hand from his left'.[43] More argues that no one should place such store in the word of a confessor that she forgets her confidence should be in God, for if she did, then she is destined to 'die perplexed and troubled'.[44] Confessors were also wont to disagree among themselves: the one might warrant the penitent where the other would bring her into mortal dread. More herself was suspicious of one particular confessor's motives and his desire for control, asking, 'should I […] put my soul into his hands, who desired to know all that had passed in my life, to inform him in some things he desired to know out of policy, thereby to tie me to himself more absolutely?'[45] Suspecting that such *policy* or stratagem reflected not piety and judgment but rather a bid for personal control over her, More explains how the autonomy encouraged by Baker's methods enabled her to evade such tactics.[46]

More's faith in the self-directed methods she had practised was indeed fast until the end. Margaret Gascoigne had Julian for her deathbed focus; when More died (of smallpox, aged 27), though she had made a confession during her illness, she declined to speak with a priest the night before she died; she did not even ask for Baker, but asked those with her to 'give him thanks a thousand times, who had brought her to such a pass that she could confidently go out of this life without speaking to any man'. Catherine Gascoigne remarked 'how confidently she died, relying wholly upon God'.[47]

The nuns of Cambrai were engaged and educated readers who benefited from a programme of devotion and spiritual practice that drew on the texts of the medieval mystic past. These works enabled them to participate in a special kind of literary community in which they were encouraged in their affinity with earlier greats like Julian, so that their figurative isolation not only saw them excluded from Protestant realms but ultimately included in an insular medieval tradition. The engagement with the mystic by which the sisters diverged from the usual authorities placed the nuns beyond the usual pattern of Benedictine spirituality, and made a sort of rebellion even out of strict claustration.

---

[42] More, 'Apology', in *Writings*, pp. 261, 263.

[43] More, 'Apology', in *Writings*, p. 243.

[44] More, 'Apology', in *Writings*, p. 244.

[45] More, 'Apology', in *Writings*, pp. 245–6.

[46] A later treatise from Cambrai reflects the continuity of this determination among the Cambrai sisters in that it is entitled, 'A notable treatise of the meanes to be observed by a Soule to come to the perfection of a Spirituall life, either w[i]th or w[i]thout a Director' (A.D.N., 20H 35).

[47] More, *Writings*, pp. 271, 279 (Augustine Baker's accounts from lay sister Hilda Percy and the abbess Catherine Gascoigne).

The experience of and longing for transcendence, going beyond the world, are predicated on the awareness of space that is often inextricable from mystic endeavour. de Certeau remarked that in the era that came after the middle ages, mysticism was 'a suspect neighbourhood', a 'stigmatized region' of conflict and plots – mysticism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was 'generally inseparable from quarrels and struggles. No mystics without trials'.[48] Not only did the Cambrai nuns venture out of their country, out of the newly Protestant territory, to be cloistered away from the world, but they also engaged with the writings of self-directed, sometimes outspoken recluses, and occasionally even with those who might be called heretics.[49] As sisters who were happy to be doing it for themselves, there was an extent to which they even stood outside of the norms of their own order: for some in the Benedictine Congregation they were beyond another pale.

The nuns' unusual independence in spiritual self-governance was bolstered by the emphasis on their own reading and interpretation in the Cambrai method initiated by Baker, but also by the invocation of a medieval past, which represented a space beyond Ignatian teachings, beyond the Protestant present, and beyond the cloister. This 'medievalism' contributed to the sisters' spiritual methodology and singular style of devotion, which intersected with the liminal space in which they practised it: drawing from models from a different space and time – mystic space, perhaps – which supported a more independent and individualistic approach to life in religion that, while benefiting by the encouragement of a male director, did not rely on it. From the convent of Our Lady of Comfort, what we have are only fragments of what was, but these remnants offer a tantalizing glimpse of the tensions between orthodoxy and rebellion, independence of confessors and devotion to them, quiet seclusion and textual community, medieval writers and their readers in exile.

---

[48] M. de Certeau, *The Mystic Fable: Volume Two – the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, ed. L. Giard, trans. M. B. Smith (Chicago, Ill., 2015), p. 5; de Certeau's *la mystique* is translated by Smith as *mystics*.

[49] A.D.N., 20H 17 consists of a tract by 'Geronimo de Ferrara' – Girolamo Savonarola. It is copied seemingly out of concern for the completeness of the nuns' seclusion, advising, 'Nor is it enough […] that the convent door be kept allwaies shutt; the spouse of Christ must not only flie into a monastery to hide herselfe from the world, but even there seeke a farther retreate'. A.D.N., 20H 17, 'A short Treatise of ye three principall Vertues and Vows of Religious Persons' (11v-12). Also in *Selected Writings of Girolamo Savonarola: Religion and Politics, 1490–1498*, ed. A. Borelli and M. Pastore Passaro (New Haven, Conn., 2006).

II. Going places

6. Men on pilgrimage – women adrift: thoughts on gender in sea narratives from early medieval Ireland

Eivor Bekkhus

In Ireland, manuscript culture followed Christianization during the latter half of the fifth century. As a natural consequence, the earliest literature was of a religious nature and written in Latin. This culture was distinct from the native culture of learning sustained by memorization and oral transmission. However, the Irish began early to write in the vernacular, at first in the form of glosses commenting on or explaining biblical manuscripts. With the introduction of native language, native stories followed, resulting in entire manuscripts written in Irish representing a marriage of two traditions – monastic manuscript culture and native storytelling. What happened in the external world was echoed, sometimes subtly, in the world of written compositions. Pertinent to this chapter, maritime customs or events unique to Ireland contributed to the development of a certain type of narrative. Viewing stories as windows to the contemporary cultural and spiritual milieu of their composers, the aim of this chapter is to look at a selection of sea narratives, primarily voyage tales, and what they suggest about attitudes to gender in early Ireland.

The number of sea pilgrimages peaked in Ireland in the sixth and seventh centuries, in a country still coming to terms with the increasing dominance of Christian institutions. Communities such as those of Patrick at Armagh, Ailbe at Emly and Columba at Iona flourished to become among the most influential centres of religion and politics until the twelfth century. Some of the pioneering saints were part of the tradition which idealized pilgrimage. The island community founded by Columba on Iona is described as one destination for pilgrimages. Another was established by Enda, possibly a student from Emly, on the Aran Islands – henceforth called 'Aran of the saints'.

One extraordinary form of sea pilgrimage, however, was pilgrimage without any pre-set destination. It may have been inspired by the hermits on the Continent, seeking out deserts in which to devote themselves completely to prayer and reflection. In Ireland, this translated into setting

E. Bekkhus, 'Men on pilgrimage – women adrift: thoughts on gender in sea narratives from early medieval Ireland', in *Gender in medieval places, spaces and thresholds*, ed. V. Blud, D. Heath and E. Klafter (2018), pp. 93–106.

out to sea in fragile boats without oars, to be guided by God himself to their *locus resurrectionis*[1] on 'a desert in the ocean'. In addition, it appears likely that the sea pilgrimage was done in imitation of a punishment involving the casting adrift of unwanted individuals. Precisely how old this punishment is, is a matter of dispute, but it appears that it at least gained support in the early Christian society as a less violent alternative to the death penalty. Furthermore, by committing someone to the elements, God could be given a say in the ultimate fate of the punished individual. As stated by Kathleen Hughes, involuntary pilgrimage was sometimes used as a disciplinary action within the monastic community. A monk could be sent away for a limited time to live under a different abbot, or exiled forever for graver offences, as she exemplifed with the eighth-century *Excarpsus Cummeani*, where a rule states that 'the man who commits murder after becoming a monk, shall die unto the world with perpetual pilgrimage'.[2]

However, as Christian communities grew disenchanted with the realization of these hazardous pilgrimages, fascination for them was carried into the realm of literature. As the sea pilgrimage was primarily a male activity, the voyages of men dominated the story tradition and produced a vastly larger body of material than sea ventures of women. Religious practices inspired devotional texts, and in *c.*800, the Litany of Pilgrim Saints/'second Litany of Irish Saints', was compiled. The Litany bears the mark of being composed for religious use, the last invocations following a formulaic 'VII holy bishops from X, *per Iesum*', presumably embracing the churches the authors wished to honour. The first invocations, however, are specific and call upon several known saints and churches founded in the sixth century, such as Ailbe of Emly: *Da fher déc lotar la Ailbe dochum néca, per Iesum.*[3]

The entry constitutes one of the extant proofs of Ailbe's legacy as a pilgrim saint, not unexpected as part of religious material. But like several names and places mentioned in the Litany, the legacy is carried forward in secular tales. Following the literary trail of St. Ailbe provides an insight into the depiction of males in sea narratives. The ninth-century *Navigatio Sancti Brendani* tell the story of the saint and his companions going to sea to explore the wonders of the natural and, indeed, supernatural world. They visit a number of islands, which may be more or less allegorical, among them the island of St. Ailbe. On Ailbe's island, Brendan and his fellow voyagers celebrate Christmas, during which they observe the altar lamps being magically set alight by a flying arrow, the candles burning without being consumed because the light is of a spiritual kind. Ailbe likens it to the burning bush of Mount Sinai, implying that in the presence of God, the holy congregation have their needs fulfilled. The Latin *Navigatio* combines religious messages and an exciting story of a dramatic journey at sea with the building of a saint's legacy. However, it has little in the way of character development. Brendan starts out as a holy man, he goes to sea for the sake of his devotion, and he returns a holy man. But the story, an account of which existed by the end of the seventh century, gave way to a unique type of tale.[4]

---

[1] 'The place of resurrection'.

[2] K. Hughes, 'The changing theory and practice of Irish pilgrimage', *Jour. Eccles. History*, xi (1960), 143–51, at p. 145.

[3] 'Twelve men who followed Ailbe to their death'. *CELT: Corpus of Electronic Texts*, ed. B. Färber and S. Ó Corráin. See <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/G206009/text008.html> [accessed 27 Dec. 2017].

The secular Irish voyage tale, called *immram,* presents a slightly more complex story with conflicted protagonists. The expositions are quite dramatic, and the voyagers typically go to sea as a punishment or penance for violence they have committed – or with the intention to do violence. They reach many fantastical islands, and at the journey's end, they are changed, as are outlook and agenda.

In line with the idea that vernacular literature may provide insight to the mentality of the environment or culture in which it was created, M. Ní Mhaonaig has argued that *Immram Curaig ua Corra*, 'The Voyage of O'Corra's Boat', reflects a reform-minded zeitgeist of twelfth-century Ireland, expressing optimism for the salvation of all men.[5] The protagonists of the story are listed in the above-mentioned Litany of Irish Saints: *Trí hÚi Chorra cona morfessiur, per Iesum.*[6] The voyage tale describes a dramatic development from a criminal life to a holy one. The three O'Corra brothers are born to a couple who, in desperation, turned to devil-worship to remedy their lack of heirs. Reaching a conclusion that they therefore owe their lives to the devil, the brothers go to war against the devil's enemies. They wreak a great deal of destruction, killing clerics and burning churches of their province, before they are converted. During their later, self-imposed sea voyage, they are repeatedly told that they will not go to Hell for their sins.

---

[4] J. Carney, 'Language and literature to 1169', in *A New History of Ireland: Prehistoric and Early Ireland*, ed. D. Ó Cróinín (Oxford, 2005), pp. 450–510, at p. 509, notes that an account of Brendan's voyage is alluded to in a poem describing the reading material for a young monastic student: *fil and laid do-dergéni Brénainn forsin muir*, 'a lay that Brendan had made upon the sea'.

[5] M. Ní Mhaonaig, 'Pagans and holy men: literary manifestations of twelfth-century reform', in *Reform and Renewal: Ireland and Twelfth-Century Reform*, ed. D. Bracken and D. Ó Riain-Raedel (Dublin, 2006).

[6] 'The three O'Corra with their seven'.

They even meet the followers of Ailbe. In the Litany mentioned above, the followers of Ailbe are commemorated in the line preceding the line about the O'Corra, and when the two sets of pilgrims meet on an island, one of the most beautiful scenes of the tale plays out. The O'Corra arrive at the island at midnight and are welcomed by Ailbe's followers. As a different take on the holy light seen at Ailbe's island in the *Navigatio*, the only light there is '*griangnúis cáich fri araile díb*'.[7] In the Litany, the followers of Ailbe died during their pilgrimage, but in a moving twist of the voyage tale, they await the dawn on the island, singing requiems for those who die at sea. And through the O'Corra's welcome on this island, holy men of the past and grave criminals are united in the assurance that they are all destined for salvation.

This motif of criminals converted to sainthood is found in both religious and secular literature. The third part of the tripartite life of St. Patrick includes an episode about MacCuil, initially portrayed as an evil man in all respects who attempts to kill the saint. Patrick converts the man and sentences him summarily to be sent adrift. Entrusted to God's judgement, MacCuil drifts to the Isle of Man, where he becomes the bishop.[8] Further, the punishment is presented as the Christian way of retribution in the secular *Immram Snédgusa ocus Maic Riagla*.[9] When the men of Ross kill their oppressive king, two clerics from Iona advise that sixty couples of them are to be sent adrift in small boats, and not be allowed to return. Later the two clerics decide to follow the men to see what becomes of them. They reach an island where they are welcomed by a group of people they do not recognize. The men of Ross eventually reveal their identity – their lives are renewed on the island, their leader is its new king, and they are all purged from sin.

The annals of early Ireland leave little doubt that the *immrama* are compositions wrought in markedly violent times. A wish for reduced levels of societal violence seems a likely motivator for their authors. The incorporation of Irish oral storytelling traditions into Christian manuscript tradition allowed them to write a world they wished for, if not the one they necessarily had. And in this world, they could venerate the idea that God could miraculously convert even the worst of the worst. As a literary tool of conversion stories, the protagonists were given a dual origin. Máel Dúin, protagonist of *Immram Curaig Maíle Dúin,* is the offspring of a warrior and a raped nun, and carries therefore the potential for violence as well as holiness.[10] When going to sea to find and kill his father's murderers, the voyage changes him to the point he forgives the murderers when he eventually finds them. The O'Corra brothers of *Immram Curaig úa Corra* are born to devil-worshipping parents, but are converted after the encounter with their mother's clerical father.

---

[7] 'The sunny face of each towards the other (*Immrama*, ed. A. G. van Hamel (Dublin, 1941), p. 108).

[8] *Bethu Phátraic*, ed. K. Mulchrone (Dublin, 1939), pp. 131–4.

[9] 'The voyage of Snédgus and Mac Riagla'.

These examples demonstrate a literary treatment of destructive men as overwhelmingly benevolent, to the point that the aspect of penance through the voyage at sea appears downplayed. While the voyage section of the tales is frequently interpreted as an act of penance, this element is blurred when the converted 'devil-worshippers' of *Immram Curaig ua Corra* set out to sea. Having fulfilled a practical type of penance by rebuilding the churches they destroyed, the motion to go to sea is sparked by a curiosity to explore the natural world.[11] When the clerics of Iona in *Immram Snédgusa ocus Maic Riagla* encounter the men guilty of regicide, they are on an island of women, feasting till the Last Day. The voyage tales retain a sense of adventure, no doubt as part of their dual purpose as both entertainment and a way of preaching Christian values. Through adventures in Christian waters, sins are forgiven, malevolent characters made benevolent – and for men, the prospects are bright.

For women at sea, it is different. Thomas Charles-Edwards has stated that pilgrimages were classified by different degrees. Any pilgrim could be a *peregrinus,* but a destination reached after a sea voyage was considered a *potioris peregrinationis locus*.[12] A nun in Jonas's *Vita Columbani* demonstrates that gender was a deciding factor regarding which type of pilgrimage was acceptable. Advising the young Columba, she tells him that 'it was fifteen years since she had left home and settled in her *peregrinationis locus*, but if she had not been a woman she would have crossed the sea and sought out a *potioris peregrinationis locus*'.[13] A woman at sea was, then, rarely a pilgrim. In the few accounts of holy women at sea, the voyage is marked by immediacy and transiency, typically an escape to protect her life or virtue.

However, a woman could be sent adrift as a punishment. In 697, *Cáin Adomnán* gained support from an impressive list of secular and ecclesiastical leaders in Ireland and Scotland.[14] A later recording of the law claimed an agenda on behalf of Adomnán of creating a less violent society for women and condemns the killing of women and other non-combatants. However, it states that women, like men, deserved the death penalty for murder, poisoning leading to death, burning and plundering of churches. But instead of being put to death, she is to be sent adrift and face God's judgement. Sending female criminals adrift is, then, a way of circumventing the death penalty, or sentencing them to a death penalty which the community would not have to witness or accept responsibility for. *Cáin Adomnán* specifies that the woman is to be sent adrift when the wind is from the land, indicating that no small miracle was required to bring her back. Though the punishment provided the smallest hope instead of none, perhaps a survival was not really intended or likely. Mary Byrne shows that men could be sent adrift if the crime was unintentional, or they were given some form of legal exemption.[15] The fact that women were punished for grave crimes in the same way men were punished for unintentional crimes suggests that women were to a lesser degree than men held responsible for their actions. Further, when the literary imagination is open to extreme rehabilitation of male criminals while female characters tend to have stagnant functions throughout the stories they inhabit, it reinforces the idea of man as an active member of the community with the capacity for change, and woman as a merely negative or positive asset.

---

[10] 'The voyage of Máel Dúin's boat'.

[11] Though the scene where the brothers watch the sunset and wish to know what happens when the sun goes 'under the sea' may have additional depth as an allegory of conversion from old faith via baptism, it still removes the focus from the voyage as penance or punishment.

[12] 'Higher place of pilgrimage'.

[13] T. Charles-Edwards, 'The social background to Irish *peregrinatio*', in *The Otherworld Voyage*, ed. J. M. Wooding (Dublin, 2000), pp. 94–108.

The punishment of women in this manner may be connected to another aspect of early Ireland, where what is shameful to society is removed from it. Legal and secular texts describe the sending adrift of children born from incest.[16] Byrne states that women in early times could be burnt for unchastity, and gives the following examples: *Cath Cnucha*, where Murni is subject to the sentence by her own father for marrying against his wishes, and *Eachtra Airt Meic Cuind*, where Bécuma escapes the pyre after sleeping with Mannanán's son when Mannanán himself intervenes and insists on sending her adrift instead. Though these examples are exclusively collected from secular literature, they have a ring of honour killing and may reflect a society in which women's sexuality was heavily guarded. Furthermore, the reason Mannanán gives for subjecting the woman to the alternative punishment, 'so that her sins may not cleave to the land', provides an interesting link to a mythological concept of woman where her virtues or flaws are symptoms of the land.

---

[14] 'The law of Adomnán', also known as *Lex Innocentium*.

[15] M. Byrne, 'On the punishment of sending adrift', in Wooding, *The Otherworld Voyage*, pp. 22–6, at p. 24.

[16] Byrne quotes a legal text concerning the issue in Wooding, *The Otherworld Voyage*, p. 23. An episode is described in Cóir Anmann §55, see <https://celt.ucc.ie//published/G503002/> [accessed 27 Dec. 2017].

The female characters of early Irish secular literature are, as primarily noblewomen, frequently interpreted in the light of the 'sovereignty goddess'.[17] Treated as a necessary component to the successful rulership of a man, she has two sides. The benevolent sovereignty is beautiful, complacent, diligent and unselfish; the malevolent is terrible, immoral, selfish, and sometimes coarsely sexual. The utilization of what are theorized to be humanized goddesses might imply more about contemporary views of women than about pre-Christian goddess worship. In a setting where a significant part of a woman's worth was the alliances she could help forge through strategic marriages, one might imagine that stories of the meek and flexible sovereignty goddess had an inspirational function and solidified a simple view of woman as either helper or hinderer. As the goddess, united with the ruler in a *hieros gamos*, represents the territory, so may women in a wider sense. If women at some level were considered representatives of the territory they belonged to, their looks, demeanour and actions may have been relevant to the prosperity of that territory. And if a woman was no longer aligned with the ideal, one might imagine she was no longer a symbol of prosperity, but of the shame of a ruler's, in extension a man's, inability to keep order. The sending adrift thus became a way not just of punishing her, but removing the shameful element for the sake of the society. This background suggests that when women turn up in sea narratives, something is not as it should be.

When discussing women at sea in early Irish literary tradition, the immediate association is *Tír inna mBan*, 'the Land of Women', the otherworld island of voyage tales where seafaring men are lured ashore for endless feasting and love-making with the women, unaware that centuries are passing them by in the real world. As often when interpreting women in medieval Irish secular literature, it is hard to escape pre-Christian goddesses. Yet while women in stories tinged with mythology may have roots in pre-Christian conceptions of the world, medieval Irish attitudes to women may be found in the way they are made human. The land of women is an international motif which embraces both the Irish island and Greek myth (such as the country of the Amazons).[18] The punishment of sending adrift for women is described in Greek myths as well as Irish.[19]

---

[17] See, for instance, M. Ní Bhrolcháin: *An Introduction to Early Irish Literature* (Dublin, 2009), pp. 102–9.

[18] F112 in S. Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature* (6 vols., Indiana, 1956), iii. 20.

[19] Cf. Danae, sent adrift over an unlawful pregnancy, in *Apollodorus,* bk. 2, ch. 4, sect. 1, see <http://data.perseus.org/citations/urn:cts:greekLit:tlg0548.tlg001.perseus-eng1:2.4> [accessed Dec. 2017].

Lebor Gábala Érinn describes how Ireland came to be populated through a series of invasions, involving a tradition concerning women of dubious character reaching the British Isles by boat. According to the work, the first invasion is made by a woman named Cessair. The numerous versions of the story suggest that the goddess Banba was at some point involved in the myth, as she sometimes is associated with or identified with Cessair herself, or Alba, one of the women accompanying Cessair. Some versions, aiming to tie the story up with Christian tradition, have Cessair coming from the east with fifty women and three men. Significantly, she comes in disgrace, escaping the flood after having been denied access to Noah's Ark. Setting foot in Ireland, as the first of the human race, the three men divide the women between them. The unsuccessful 'invaders' soon died, and the land remained uninhabited for 300 years. Nonetheless, the Cessair legend appears to be more fruitful in mythological descendants. It is worth noting that one of the women accompanying Cessair was named Alba. Later an Irish name for Britain (and eventually, Scotland), Alba is derived from the Celtic *albiiū* with a probable meaning of 'world, earth, land', which also yielded the name Albion, an early name for Britain.[20] And on the British side, a tradition emerged where Albion is a name derived from Albine, the first human setting foot in Britain, as related in *De Origine Gigantum* and retold in the various Anglo-Norman tales and poems including the much later Mohun Chronicle (ll. 67–96) written for a Norman family in the mid fourteenth century.[21] To summarize this foundation myth, like Cessair, Albine arrived in disgrace, though in her case because she and her sister were cast adrift from Greece as punishment for their failed coup d'état and attempted murder of their other sisters and their father. When the sisters landed they initially quarrelled over who should rule the island. When each one had settled on their territory, they longed for men to sleep with them. As no men lived on the island, the sisters lay with evil spirits instead and subsequently gave birth to giants which populated the land until human men led by Brutus arrived and turned the chaos to order by expelling the giants.

So far, the story examples show a rather grim image of women taking shape. Seeking rulership, they fail, and the failure is due to moral failings, internal quarrels and unbridled sexuality. As a thought experiment, one could imagine a development of the female fellowship at sea. In this development, the community takes on an increasingly predatory quality and, unlike Brutus, the men crossing the path are not necessarily able to impose any sense of order on it. Considering the element of Irish mythology where a conquered enemy is relocated to the underworld or otherworld, it links the disgraced women at sea to a different origin myth. Dissociated from land and good society, the story is centred on a group of women beneath the sea, whose actions give name to the inlet *Indber nAilbine.* The occurrence of *Ailbine* shows a seeming affinity with *Alba* and *Albine*. However, the Metrical Dindschendchas, a work expounding the origin of place names, seeks to give another etymology for the name, perhaps in a deliberate attempt to add further depth or even ambiguity. Prince Rúadan is on his way from Ireland to Norway, when his boats suddenly cannot move. Diving into the sea, Rúadan finds that there are nine women down there, and that it is they who have arrested the boats. It does not cause him much distress:

---

[20] *Celtic Culture: a Historical Encyclopedia*, ed. J. T. Koch (5 vols., Santa Barbara, Calif., 2006), i. 37.

[21] J. Spence, 'The Mohun Chronicle: an introduction, edition and translation', *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, lv (2011), 149–216, at pp. 161–2 and see n. 41 on other Anglo-Norman sources for the Albine myth. I am grateful to Diane Heath for directing my attention to this text.

> He slept nine nights with the women
> without gloom, without tearful lament,
> under the sea free from waves
> on nine beds of bronze.
>
> Though a woman of them was with child by him,
> he went from them on no unlucky course
> it was a leave misused
> on condition that he should come back again.[22]

Rúadan turns out not to be a man of his word. Unlike Brutus, his visit does nothing to impose any sense of order on the female community. On the way back, he avoids the women. They chase after him into a bay, and the woman who had given birth to Rúadan's child hurls the boy at him, killing them both. Witnesses cry out: *'Dreadful, dreadful was the deed!'* – giving the bay its name *Indber nAilbine* 'bay of the dreadful dead', the name Ailbine being explained as a compound of *oll* 'dreadful' and *bine* 'deed'. Edging closer to the land of women of voyage tales, this story portrays a predatory community of women. Their sins are not just in the past, they remain a threat to men who cross their path. Signalling a deep mistrust of female fellowship, the authors have shaped them into sexual sirens with the underlying capability to commit grave crimes, should their one and only character motivation not be fulfilled: possession of men.

---

[22] *CELT: Corpus of Electronic Texts*, trans. E. Gwynn, ed. B. Färber and S. Ó Corráin. See <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T106500B/> [accessed 1 Oct. 2017].

When the sinister community of women was developed to form part of the island inventory of the *immram*, it entered a narrative world with a specific matter at heart: the saving of souls. Demonstrating a view that no sin is too grave for redemption (and sometimes, high offices in church or society), heathens and men of violence are sent through the baptismal waters of the *immram* sea, where they encounter islands inhabited by the pious and the fantastical. As the stories are ripe with elements from the sea pilgrimage tradition, the women may seem like secular time-outs in the conversion story. Several islands are religiously themed and inhabited by anchorites or Christian communities. At these islands, the voyagers are frequently encouraged to continue their journey as the island in question is not their *locus resurrectionis* – the place in which to die and be resurrected on the Last Day. This is a noteworthy point because it is such a contrast to the reception the voyagers receive at the land of women. If and when they reach it, they are coerced or forced to go ashore and distracted into staying as long as possible by its female inhabitants. The atmosphere is uneasy. The men are reluctant to enter the island, and though they may enjoy the pleasures offered them there for some time, they eventually wish to leave, and when they do, the women are upset and may resist.

In *Immram Brain* reaching the land of women is the motivation for the journey.[23] The queen of the island seeks out Bran in a vision, filling him with a yearning for her island by describing it as a sinless, earthly paradise. When Bran and his fellow voyagers reach the island, they are seized by doubts and hesitate to go ashore. But by casting out a ball of thread attaching itself to Bran's hand, the queen of the island pulls them in. Well ashore, they enjoy the culinary and sexual comforts of the island, but after a while they get homesick and want to go home. Though they eventually leave the island, the queen is reluctant to let them. *Immram Brain* differs in style and structure from the other voyage tales, and has been argued to be closer to an *eachtra* ('adventure') than an actual *immram*, focusing on the land of women as a destination more than the voyage as an act of penance. The contemporary literate may, however, have considered Bran's story to be an *immram* because it, like the others, concerned laypersons encountering the Christian faith and changing their perspective through a voyage at sea. Though there is no frame story about violence or crime in *Immram Brain*, the motivation of the protagonist changes throughout the tale; from seeking the Land of Women to seeking inclusion in the Christian faith.

As the attention of the *immram* composers turned to the problem of violence in the contemporary society, characters and plots became more complex. The Land of Women became more complex, and in *Immram Curaig Maíle Dúin* ('the voyage of Máel Dúin's boat') the echoes of the forlorn would-be rulers with an insatiable desire for men is particularly clear. Chancing by the island inhabited by women, Máel Dúin and his men spend time there enjoying the pleasures the women can offer. So far, the episode seems identical to the one in *Immram Brain*. But then more is told of the women's background: there used to be a king on the island, but he is dead. As he and the queen had sixteen daughters, there is no rightful heir. The queen rules, creating a society of opposite gender norms than would have been customary in the external world of the story. Máel Dúin and his men wait at home; the queen is out performing her duties as a ruler. And while the queen can promise him a life of luxury, there is no mention of him desiring or assuming the place of a ruler. Remarkably enough, Máel Dúin appears satisfied with his situation until his fellow voyagers complain that he is nurturing feelings for the queen that are too strong, and persuade him to move on. Then, when they leave, in opposition to the queen's wishes, she does what she can to stop them. When setting out, the crew, recognizable from *Immram Brain*, is cast out in an attempt to recapture Máel Dúin's boat. Nonetheless, the boat leaves the island, to the sound of wails. Women and land are equalled as it is pointed out that '*gabais gol 7 éigem corbo óengair, gol 7 éigem a tír uile*'.[24]

---

[23] 'The voyage of Bran'.

To understand why the motif of the Land of Women has been brought into tales about redemption, it may be useful to consider the overall message of the Irish voyage tale. In order to save their souls, the voyagers are guided through what may be interpreted as different factions of the Christian world. Visions of hell appearing on the waves and islands inhabited by former sea pilgrims or anchorites who await judgement confirm a theory that the sea really is a pre-stage of the afterlife – an interval between earthly life and the final judgement of Christian belief. In this existence, the different factions have different expectations for their eternities. Those who are sure of their salvation wait peacefully for the return of Christ and urge the voyagers onwards. But the community of women wait uneasily, anxious about being left alone.

It is not easy to contextualize every element of the *immram*, which were also intended to entertain. But it would seem plausible that maritime memories were utilized to provide their audiences with reference points. Island encounters based on pilgrim saints known to the audience showed the voyagers the way to salvation. Displaying the anxiety and desperation of sinners not sure of their salvation, the island of morally compromised women alludes to different associations. The Land of Women may rest on the ruins of goddess traditions, but in the context of the voyage tale, any goddess aspect may conceivably be downplayed in favour of the fresher memory of the criminal female rejected from her homeland. *Immram* encounters with women always involve a conflict with men, the voyagers, or others, and in one of them in particular, echoes of women sent adrift for unlawful sexual affairs. In *Immram Curaig ua Corra*, the voyagers sail through a sequence of visions of hell, several of them not placed on islands, but on the surface of the sea. During this sequence, a flock of many coloured birds emerges from hell, one of the birds alighting on the gunwale of the boat. Human souls are often symbolized by birds in early Irish literature, and the voyagers wonder indeed if this might be a messenger sent by God. The bird tells them that she is the soul of a woman from Ireland, and relates to them her sin: '*fer ica raba-sa isin saegul, 7 ni dernus a reir, 7 nir' lenus do lanumhnus dligidh*'.[25] The episode further displays a differential treatment with regard to crimes and punishment. While the woman is punished by hell's demons, she confirms that the O'Corra will not go to hell, though they point out that their sins are grave enough to deserve it. As they are former devil-worshipping murderers, this seems like a bizarre understatement. The composers might, however, have wished to show that the conversion was of greater importance to them than the sin, in the process revealing a prejudice that men had a greater a capacity for change than women.

---

[24] 'It began wailing and screaming as if it was one cry, the whole land was wailing and screaming' (*Immrama*, ed. van Hamel, p. 45).

While secular women are confined to strict narrative roles, female saints sometimes stretch the boundaries. The life of St. Senán, sixth-century bishop of Inis Cathaigh (Scattery Island), includes an interlude with Canair, a holy woman from Benntraige in the south of Ireland. One night after Nocturns, she has a vision of pillars of fire, and the tallest pillar rises from the church of Inis Cathaigh. She decides to go there, in hopes that her 'place of resurrection' may be near it. She walks to Luimnech, the pillar of fire clear in her mind, and then proceeds to walk on the water until she comes to Senán's island. But on reaching it and relating her errand, Senán denies her entry. The island is forbidden for women. In the following debate, this passionate argument is ascribed to Canair:

> Christ is no worse than thou. Christ came to redeem women no less than to redeem men. No less did He suffer for the sake of women than for the sake of men. Women have given service and tendance unto Christ and His Apostles.

---

[25] 'I had a husband in life, and I did not his will, and I did not stay true to my marriage' (*Immrama*, ed. van Hamel, pp. 105–6).

> No less than men do women enter the heavenly kingdom. Why, then, shouldst thou not take women to thee in thine island?[26]

The episode depicts the barriers faced by ambitious women of early medieval Ireland in an intriguingly literal way. But the inclusion of Canair's struggle suggests that it was of concern to at least one author of the time (presumably male), that women of the church might fulfil the same demands as those laid upon men, but gain a smaller reward. Contributing with a glimpse of feminist argumentation, Canair nonetheless must settle for a guest appearance in hagiography dedicated to a man.

Considering the close connection between literature and the society it is shaped in, sea narratives of medieval Ireland were built with elements from cultural memory. With regards to the stories of men, the elements seem clear. A punishment custom was merged with Christian asceticism – a practice transferred into a literary genre. Where the stories from the earliest time of Christianity in Ireland sought to establish the heroes of Christian communities, later secular tales extended their attention to the world outside the churches. The voyage at sea provided a narrative device where the male evildoer could be transformed into a religious ideal. The sharp contrast in the treatment of women indicates a different backdrop. No Christian author had interest in venerating pagan goddesses, but if the cultural story repertoire included communities of more or less otherworldly women, such elements may have been utilized. Adding contemporary attitudes to the kind of women who would be in unguarded settings at sea, the Land of Women took shape. Excluded from the 'highest form of pilgrimage', but not from the punishment of sending adrift, sea voyage became a barrier between exemplary women and criminal women. Consequently, placed on islands in the eschatological *immram* sea, the male saints and secular heroes can await the Last Day in peaceful anticipation, while the women dissociated from the homeland wait anxiously for someone from the land of the living to bring, if only momentary, relief. Cultural memory appears a strong contributor to the portrayal of women in sea narratives, whereas the stories of men are to a larger degree guided by contemporary concerns such as establishing saints and rehabilitating criminals. In secular literature, positive transformation through a journey at sea is a possibility granted to men, while female characters remain unchanged. For women, it is the world of hagiography we need to enter to see tradition for the mere sake of tradition lose some of its virtue.

---

[26] *Lives of the Saints from the Book of Lismore,* ed. and trans. W. Stokes (Oxford, 1890), p. 219.

7. ‘*Yfallen out of heigh degree*’: Chaucer’s Monk and crises of liminal masculinities*

Martin Laidlaw

Conventions of masculine agency in the works of Geoffrey Chaucer are rooted in concepts of vocation, particularly the expected behaviour of an individual in relation to their social position. As Holly Crocker argued, ‘Chaucer’s poetry provides multiple examples of masculinity’s failure to secure a comprehensive claim to conformity in the middle ages’.[1] This can be seen in *The Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer’s ‘moveable stage from Southwark to Canterbury’,[2] upon which ‘the characters which compose all ages and nations’ perform.[3] Crocker highlighted the friction between the Merchant and the Clerk as being ‘the type of competition that is meant to establish and rank different forms of masculine agency’.[4] A further example of this inability to assert a fixed ideal of masculine behaviour can be seen in the descriptions of the Knight and his son in *The General Prologue*. Whereas the Knight is noted in regard to his love of ‘chivalrie, trouthe and honour, fredom and curteisie’ (I.A.45–6), the Squire is described as ‘a lovyere and a lusty bacheler’ (I.A.80), who favours ‘syngynge […] or floytynge, al the day’ (I.A.91). Here the Knight’s blood-stained gypon contrasts with the Squire, who is ‘fressh as is the monthe of May’ (I.A.92), and the pair present a shifting paradigm of celebrated masculine qualities.[5]

Notions of masculinities take on additional meanings when applied to figures with a religious vocation, and in *The Canterbury Tales* Chaucer

---

* I wish to extend my sincere thanks to the editors of this volume for their effort and insight which contributed greatly to this chapter and helped to shape its focus.

[1] H. Crocker, *Chaucer’s Visions of Manhood* (Basingstoke, 2007), p. 3.

[2] R. M. Lumiansky, *On Sondry Folk: the Dramatic Principle of the Canterbury Tales* (Austin, Tex., 1980), p. 7.

[3] W. Blake, ‘The Canterbury pilgrims’, in *English Critical Essays*, ed. E. Jones (1971), pp. 72–80, at p. 73.

[4] H. Crocker, ‘Performative passivity and fantasies of masculinity in the Merchant’s tale’, in *Chaucer Review*, xxxviii (2003), 178–98, at p. 180.

[5] *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. L. Benson *et al.* (Oxford, 1987); all quotations are taken from this edition.

M. Laidlaw, ‘“*Yfallen out of heigh degree*”: Chaucer’s Monk and crises of liminal masculinities’, in *Gender in medieval places, spaces and thresholds*, ed. V. Blud, D. Heath and E. Klafter (2018), pp. 107–22.

explores this subject adeptly in relation to the Monk and the Nun's Priest. Religious figures may be seen to occupy a liminal space in which actions or attitudes valued by reductive concepts of secular masculinity act in opposition to their vows of poverty, obedience and chastity. Through the depiction of the Monk in *The Canterbury Tales,* Chaucer presents the image of a religious who has failed to uphold the expected monastic behaviour yet who succeeds in reflecting masculine pursuits commonly associated with the nobility and laymen alike. In this model the Canterbury pilgrimage takes on a dual role: it is both a space of atonement and confession for the Monk, but it is also the 'moveable stage' upon which he demonstrates his elevated social position, handsome looks, fine attire and expensive possessions.

Of Chaucer's Canterbury pilgrims it is the Monk who, more than any other character in the text, is the subject of a continued narrative throughout the poem, particularly in the self-contained series of tales referred to as Fragment VII.[6] This chapter will demonstrate that it is not just the reader who becomes aware of his sinful actions, but also his fellow pilgrims, and in this manner the Canterbury pilgrimage takes on additional meaning for the Monk as it is the space in which his various failures to conform to the monastic ideal are judged. The Monk's transgressions against the expected conduct of his vocation can be deduced from an analysis of *The Rule of St. Benedict* and *The Rule of St. Augustine* (which is mentioned by Chaucer) for his portrait in *The General Prologue* presents a failure to meet these requirements.[7] Concepts of masculinities pervade the Monk's rejection of early monastic authorities and this manifests itself in the possessions and finery he owns; clear transgressions against the Benedictine rule that monks are 'ne quis praesumat aliquid dare aut accipere sine iussione abbatis, neque aliquid habere proprium, nullam omnino rem, neque codicem, neque tabulas, neque graphium, sed nihil omnino'.[8] The Monk's attire can be seen to be problematic in relation to this section of the *Rule*:

---

[6] Fragment VII includes 'The Shipman's Tale', 'The Prioress's Tale', 'Chaucer's Tale of Sir Thopas', 'Chaucer's Tale of Melibee', 'The Monk's Tale' and 'The Nun's Priest's Tale'.

[7] For the assumption that the monk is a Benedictine and on how Chaucer's use of the Augustinian rule to castigate the Monk's behaviour follows Gower's example, see D. Knowles, 'Chaucer's monk', in *The Religious Orders in England* (3 vols., Cambridge, 1948, 1955, 1959), II, app. 1, 365–6, at p. 365.

[8] *St. Benedict's Rule for Monasteries*, trans L. J. Doyle (Collegeville, Minn., 1948), p. 51: 'Let no one presume to give or receive anything without the Abbot's leave, or to have anything as his own, anything whatever, whether book or tablets or pen or whatever it may be'. 'Si quid debeant monachi proprium habere', St. Benedict of Nursia, *Regula Benedicti,* XXXIII (<http://www.lluisvives.com/servlet/SirveObras/jlv/02580516454693584321157/p0000001.htm#I_34_> [accessed 12 Oct. 2017]).

I sleigh his sleeves purified at the hand
With grys, and that the finest of a land;
And, for to fasten his hood under his chin,
He hadde of gold wright a curious pin;
(I.A.193–6)

Outward displays of extravagant dress function as masculine demonstrations of wealth and esteem and an examination of the Monk's clothing highlights the level of cost involved in his garments. The 'grys' of his sleeves refers to the fur of the Eurasian squirrel, and this material was prohibited to be worn by monastic figures. As Hodges writes, 'grys was specifically forbidden at the same time it was worn by many members of the clergy'.[9] The expense of the lining of the Monk's tunic is exceeded only by the gold 'curious pin' hanging underneath his chin. These displays of wealth and status reflect Crocker's statement that 'emphasis on gender's performativity highlights its dependence upon visibility'.[10] Through his clothing, the Monk seeks to project conventionally valued masculine characteristics, which are nevertheless antithetical to his vocation. In addition to his pin and fur-lined tunic, the Monk owns an array of fine horses, and greyhounds 'as swift as fowl in flight' (I.A.190). His attitude towards spending is reflected in his boots which are described as being 'souple' (I.A.203), in contrast to those of the frugal Merchant, whose boots are 'clasped faire and fetisly' (I.A.275).

The Monk's love of hunting emphasizes not only a disregard for his vow of poverty but also transgressions relating to lust. Examples of medieval associations between hunting and sex are found and explored in Petrarch's *Rime 140*, and in the doubling of the hunt and Lady Bertilak's advances towards the protagonist of the alliterative poem *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (ll. 1126–1411). The Monk's transgressions are alluded to in a succession of puns; for example, the description of him as 'an outridere that loved venerie' is a play on the Middle French *venery*, to hunt, and also the Latin *venereus*, meaning the pursuit of sexual gratification. The reference to the Monk as a 'prikasour' takes root from the term 'prick', meaning to stab, or most relevantly, penetrate. Chaucer's comment that 'of prikyng and of hunting for the hare, was al his lust, for no cost wolde he spare' (I.A.191–2) lambasts the Monk as being engaged in fornication regardless of the cost to either his purse or reputation. Later, after the Knight interrupts his tale, we, the Host and the other pilgrims learn the Monk's name is Daun Piers (VII.2792), another oblique reference to 'prikyng'.

---

[9] L. F. Hodges, 'A reconsideration of the Monk's costume', *Chaucer Review*, xxvi (1991), 133–146, at p. 136. See also arguments on the Monk as a typical 14th-century high-ranking monastic in M. Heale, 'The Monk', in *Historians on Chaucer: the General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales*, ed. S. Rigby (Oxford, 2014), pp. 137–55, at p. 144.

[10] Crocker, *Chaucer's Visions of Manhood*, p. 1.

Chaucer's Monk is described in glowing terms by the Pilgrim Chaucer, who nods as he hears the Monk's rejection of the early authorities on monasticism and exclaims 'lat Austyn have his swynk' (I.A.88). One hypothesis is that the Monk is on a pilgrimage to repent for the transgressions implied within *The General Prologue*, and that he has been disciplined for his indiscretions. Therefore, the description of the Monk as an 'outrider' may have connotations beyond the conclusion that he is 'an "out-rider" in charge of monastic estates'.[11] The Benedictine rule states:

> Is autem frater qui gravioris culpae noxa tenetur suspendatur a mensa, simul ab oratorio. Nullus ei fratrum in nullo iungatur consortio nec in conloquio. Solus sit ad opus sibi iniunctum, persistens in paenitentiae luctu, sciens illam terribilem apostoli sententiam dicentis: Traditum eiusmodi hominem in interitum carnis, ut spiritus salvus sit in die Domini.[12]

In view of this section of *The Rule of St. Benedict,* it may be argued that Chaucer's Monk functions as an exiled monastic who is doing penance for his sinful behaviour.

Textual links may also be made between the Monk's actions and *The Rule of St. Augustine,* whose author is directly referenced in the portrait of the Monk in *The General Prologue*. Chapter four of *The Rule of St. Augustine* begins, 'non sit notabilis habitus vester, nec affectetis vestibus placere sed moribus'[13] and the Monk can be seen to be transgressing this advice in his adornments, and also the description of the noise that accompanies his riding:

> And whan he rood, men myghte his bridle heere
> Gyngell in a whistling wind ales cleere

---

[11] J. S. P. Tatlock, 'Chaucer's Monk', *Modern Language Notes*, lv (1940), 350–4, at p. 351 and Heale, 'Monk', pp. 144–7.

[12] St. Benedict of Nursia, *Regula Benedicti,* Rule no. 25: 'Let the brother who is guilty of a weightier fault be excluded both from the table and from the oratory. Let none of the brethren join him either for company or for conversation. Let him be alone at the work assigned him, abiding in penitential sorrow' (trans. L. Doyle) <http://www.lluisvives.com/servlet/SirveObras/jlv/02580516454693584321157/p0000001.htm#I_26_> [accessed 12 Oct. 2017].

[13] 'Regula Sancti Augustini', *The Latin Library* (n.d.), ch. 4.1 <http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/augustine/reg.shtml> [all entries accessed 9 Oct. 2017]. 'There should be nothing about your behaviour to attract attention. Besides, you should not seek to please by your apparel, but by a good life' (*The Rule of St. Augustine*, trans. Brothers of the Order of Hermits of Saint Augustine (1976) <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/source/ruleaug.html> [all entries accessed 9 Oct. 2017]).

> And eek as loude, as dooth the chapel belle.
> (I.A.169–71)

In this statement Chaucer is satirizing the Augustinian advice not to ‘attract attention’, and aligning the transgressions of the Monk with this section of the *Rule*. It has been noted by Esther Quinn that ‘the ringing of the chapel bell [is] a reminder of the divine service upon which the Monk has turned his back’.[14] The similarities continue in Augustine’s advice, ‘quando proceditis, simul ambulate; cum veneritis quo itis, simul state’,[15] a rule which, were this not a penitential journey, would be contravened by the Monk through his presence on the pilgrimage. The advice which follows ‘in incessu, in statu, in omnibus motibus vestris nihil fiat quod cuiusquam offendat aspectum, sed quod vestram decet sanctitatem’[16] is defied in the Monk’s vocal rejection of monastic rules. The Monk is not only giving ‘offence’, but is demonstrating that he is far from a ‘holy state of life’.

What is interesting about the text of *The Rule of St. Augustine* is that the section which mirrors the failings of Chaucer’s Monk continues with a discussion on safeguarding chastity, as even to want to look at a woman lustfully, ‘ne velit feminam male videre’ was against the *Rule*.[17] There were suitable punishments for sexual misconduct:

> Et si hanc de qua loquor oculi petulantiam in aliquo vestrum adverteritis, statim admonete, ne coepta progrediatur, sed de proximo corrigatur. Quicumque autem in tantum progressus fuerit malum, ut occulte ab aliqua litteras vel quaelibet munuscula accipiat, si hoc ultro confitetur, parcatur illi et oretur pro illo; si autem deprehenditur atque convincitur, secundum arbitrium presbyteri vel praepositi gravius emendetur.[18]

---

[14] E. C. Quinn, ‘Religion in Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales: a study in language and Structure’, in *Geoffrey Chaucer: a Collection of Original Articles*, ed. G. D. Economou (New York, 1975), p. 61.

[15] ‘Whenever you go out, walk together, and when you reach your destination, stay together’ (*Rule of St. Augustine*, ch. 4.2).

[16] ‘In your walk, deportment, and in all actions, let nothing occur to give offense to anyone who sees you, but only what becomes your holy state of life’ (*Rule of St. Augustine*, ch. 4.3).

[17] ‘let him not desire to look at a woman lustfully’ (*Rule of St. Augustine*, ch. 4.5).

[18] ‘If you notice in someone of your brothers this wantonness of the eye, of which I am speaking, admonish him at once so that the beginning of evil will not grow more serious but will be promptly corrected . . . But if anyone should go so far in wrongdoing as to receive letters in secret from any woman, or small gifts of any kind, you ought to show mercy and pray for him if he confesses this of his own accord. But if the offense is detected and he is found guilty, he must be more severely chastised according to the judgment of the priest or superior’ (*Rule of St. Augustine*, ch. 4.7 and 4.11).

The Monk of *The General Prologue* presents a figure who disobeys monastic rules in relation to dress, possessions and attitude. Through the links made between *The Rule of St. Augustine* section concerning 'safeguarding chastity' and allusions to the Monk's love of hunting it can be inferred that he has been discovered to be guilty of some sexual indiscretion and is on a penitential pilgrimage to atone for this sin, yet still wearing his love-knot pin. Here we see a conflict between characteristics applauded in medieval secular masculinities and the expected pious behaviour and conduct of a monk. In desiring to embody one idealized model of masculinity, he has disgraced his obligations as a religious figure.

That the Monk may have engaged in some form of sexual activity is hinted at by Chaucer in the reference to the squirrel fur around the Monk's cuffs, for the squirrel was widely known as a medieval euphemism and symbol for sex.[19] His weakness is noticed by the assembled pilgrims and can be seen throughout the narrative of Fragment VII. As Jahan Ramazani writes, 'we can learn about the Monk not only from his direct appearances, but also from the other characters who resemble him: Daun John in 'The Shipman's Tale', Chauntecleer in 'The Nun's Priest's Tale', and the abbot in 'The Prioress's Tale'.[20] By the time the Monk is invited to speak, it will be shown that he has noted the group's awareness of his transgressions, and that 'The Monk's Tale', 'a series of entirely conventional anecdotes on the fall of great men', functions as a penitential recital.[21] However, there is a wider discussion on the subject of sacerdotal celibacy that is presented by the Host in relation to both the Nun's Priest and the Monk, and it is in these scenes that the crises of expected masculine behaviour which have led to the Monk's downfall are explored. Crucially, the figures of the Monk and the Nun's Priest create a contrast in which one adheres to requirements of sacerdotal celibacy, while the other does not.

The Monk is mocked throughout Fragment VII, something seen most directly in the opening story of the section, 'The Shipman's Tale'. Within the poem, a monk, Daun John, is shown to seek sexual relations, abandon oaths, and to manipulate the friendship of his host for wealth and comfort. The links to the Monk of the Canterbury pilgrimage who abandons the central oaths of his profession in order to seek sexual relations are plain. The tale focuses on 'a marchant whilom dwelled at Seint-Denys' (VII.1), who funds the habits of those who visit his estate. ‘Amonges alle his gestes’ is the figure of the monk, Daun John, and the two are presented as having a fraternal relationship with the note that they ‘Were bothe two yborn in o village’, and that Daun John ‘claymeth as for cosynage’ (VII.35–6). The word ‘cosyn’ is repeated sixteen times in ‘The Shipman’s Tale’ and, as Cathy Hume noted, ‘need not be restricted to a relationship through parents who are siblings’.[22] The text compounds this, stating that they are ‘knyt with eterne alliaunce’ in ‘bretherhede, whil that hir lyf may dure’ (VII.40–2). The text of ‘The Shipman’s Tale’ is focused on the payment of sex that the Monk receives for granting the wife a gift of one hundred franks,[23] which he negotiates from the Merchant. The text wryly states, highlighting a warning of lascivious monks in anticipation of Daun John’s trespass, ‘who was so welcome as my lord daun John, Oure deere cosyn, ful of curteisye?’ (VII.68–9).

---

[19] M. Jones, *The Secret Middle Ages* (Thrupp, 2002), pp. 57–8, discussed by R. Gilchrist, *Medieval Life: Archaeology and the Life Course* (Woodbridge, 2012), p. 106.

[20] J. Ramazani, 'Chaucer's Monk: the poetics of abbreviation, aggression, and tragedy', *Chaucer Review,* xxvii (1993), 260–76, at p. 260.

[21] S. B. Hemingway, 'Chaucer's Monk and Nun's Priest', *Modern Language Notes*, xxi (1916), 479–83, at p. 479.

Daun John’s discussions with the wife that lead to her offering him whatever he should desire in exchange for one hundred franks highlight his willingness to break oaths in order to pursue sexual activity, something that correlates with the transgressions of the Monk, Daun Piers. Daun John meets the wife of the merchant crying, and offers his counsel to her stating ‘telleth me youre grief. Paraventure I may, in youre meschief, Conseille or helpe’ (VII.127–9). Here, Daun John swears an oath to the wife that he will ‘nevere in my lyf, for lief ne looth, Ne shal I of no conseil yow biwreye’ (VII.132–3) and that he will keep her secret, not simply in the name of ‘cosynage ne alliance, But verraily, for love and affiance’ (VII.139–40). On the wife’s suggestion that the merchant is a ‘cosyn’ of Daun John, he rebukes this, stating:

> He is na moore cosyn unto me
> Than is this leef that hangeth on the tree!
> I clepe hym so, by Seint Denys of Fraunce
> (VII.149–51)

Further to this, the Monk says that he only made the acquaintance of the merchant ‘to have the moore cause of aqueyntaunce’ of his wife, ‘which I have loved specially Above alle wommen, sikerly’ (VII.152–4). This section alludes to the Monk, Daun Piers, in the presentation of a monastic figure who values the chance of sexual indiscretion more highly than sworn vows. That the primary aim of the tale is to criticize monks is not unnoticed by the Host, who concludes that the moral of the tale is, 'draweth no monkes moore unto your in' (VII.442) for fear they will defile your wife.

---

[22] C. Hume, ‘Domestic opportunities: the social comedy of The Shipman’s Tale’, *Chaucer Review*, xli (2006), 138–62, at p. 145. See also P. Maddern, ‘Best trusted friends: concepts and practices of friendship among fifteenth-century Norfolk gentry’, in *England in the Fifteenth Century: Proceedings of the 1992 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. N. Rogers (Stamford, Conn., 1994), pp. 100–17, at p. 103.

[23] For discussion on the approximate value of this sum, see P. G. Biedler, ‘The price of sex in Chaucer’s Shipman’s Tale’, *Chaucer Review*, xxxi (1996), 5–17.

The taunting of the Monk continues throughout Fragment VII, and is alluded to within the tale that follows, 'The Prioress's Tale'. During the height of the story, when the Little Clergeon lies with his throat cut, Madame Eglentyne makes an aside to describes the Abbot as, 'an hooly man', with the qualifier 'As monkes been – or elles oghte be' (VII.632–3). This line is of interest as it is aimed outside the narrative of her tale, appears to be directed to her fellow pilgrims, and can be taken to be a reflection on the character of the monk who has appeared in the previous *tale*. Tatlock commented, 'she probably glances at the Monk askance when saying of the Abbot who buries her little martyr' and in this moment the Prioress also provides a subtle cue to the assembled pilgrims who may have seen similarities between Daun John of 'The Shipman's Tale' and the figure accompanying them to Canterbury.[24]

Criticism of the Monk may also be seen to extend into Chaucer's 'Tale of Sir Thopas'. Although viewed to be 'rym dogerel' by the Host, the tale interacts with the presentation of the Monk as a 'prickasour', and the subject of chastity and sexual pursuit may be seen to continue the taunting of the Monk for his sexual indiscretion. References to hunting and riding, masculine pursuits favoured by the Monk, pervade 'The Tale of Sir Thopas' and there are continuities of description and habit within Chaucer's *tale* which have similarities with both Daun John and Daun Piers, the Monk of the Canterbury Pilgrimage. Thopas, like the 'physically attractive and vigorous'[25] Monk, is described as 'fair and gent'. He too displays his masculinity with an impressive array of clothing, including, 'shoon of Cordewane', 'hosen broun' of brugges, and a 'robe ... of syklatoun'. That his attire is expensive is stated in the description that it 'coste many a jane' (VII.732–5). Thopas, like the Monk, also has a fine horse, 'his steede gray' (VII.751).

The associations between the Monk and Sir Thopas can be found in their shared love of hunting, and an abandonment of oaths of chastity at the first opportunity for sexual encounter. That Thopas loves to hunt is expressed throughout the first fitt of the poem and he is said to 'hunte at wilde deer, And ride an haukyng for river, With grey goshauk on honde'

---

[24] Tatlock, 'Chaucer's Monk', p. 352.

[25] Tatlock, 'Chaucer's Monk', p. 351.

(VII.736–8). Yet while Thopas is described as chaste, 'he was chaast and no lechour' (VII.745), he is also portrayed in the language of 'prickyng' that serves as a reference for sex. Thopas 'priketh thurgh a fair forest, Therinne is many a wilde best', and 'priketh north and est' (VII.754–7), 'prikyng over hill and dale' (VII.837). The Knight's devotions of chastity are quickly abandoned, and he is seen to be 'fil in love-longynge' having 'herde the thrustel synge'. While 'prikyng on the softe gras' (VII.779) Thopas laments his solitude and having dreamed of an Elf-Queen, he 'priketh over stile and stoon An elf-queene for t'espye' (VII.798–9). The narrative of the Knight seeking love and endeavouring to travel far to find a concubine mirrors the Monk who rides out of his cloister to engage in fornication. As with the monk of 'The Shipman's Tale' who flees when he is at chance of being discovered by the husband of his partner, Thopas encounters an enraged masculine figure from whom he must escape, 'a greet geaunt, His name was Sir Olifaunt' (VII.807–8). The similarities between Thopas and the character of the Monk are evident and, as well as a proclivity for hunting and an abandonment of vows of chastity, they share expensive attire and fine horses. Thopas, while riding, is said to have a bridle that gleamed 'as the sonne shoon' (VII.879), while the Monk's bridle jingled 'gynglen' (I.A.170) in *The General Prologue*. The connection between sex and riding can be seen in Chaucer's final comments:

> And for he was a knyght auntrous,
> He nolde slepen in noon hous,
> But liggen in his hoode.
> His brighte helm was his wonger
> (VII.909–12)

The reference to the Knight's 'wonger' and his habit of sleeping 'out of house' is enough for the Host to end the tale as he is 'so wery of thy verray lewednesse' (VII.921), and thinks it 'nat worth a toord' (VII.930). It may be said that the Host intervenes to spare the blushes of the Knight, whose class is being attacked. However, this silencing of the Pilgrim Chaucer by the Host also highlights the mocking of the Monk that extends throughout Fragment VII.

This taunting of the Monk concludes with the final two tales in Fragment VII, those of the Monk and the Nun's Priest. The Prologue to 'The Monk's Tale', and the tale he tells, both suggest the misery felt by the Monk in response to the taunts of his fellow pilgrims. In addition to this, the comments of the Host to both the Monk and the Nun's Priest present a model of juxtaposed vocational commitment in relation to celibacy. The Host's invitation to the Monk to provide a tale does two things. It first introduces the notion that the Monk is, at this point, aggrieved, and this can be seen in the Host's insistence that he 'be myrie of cheere' (VII.1924). Second, it consolidates the taunting of the Monk through a satirical question: 'shal I calle yow my lord daun John, Or daun Thomas, or elles daun Albon?' (VII.1929–30). The presence of 'Daun John' as the first name suggested by the Host immediately conflates the Monk, Daun Piers, with the subject of 'The Shipman's Tale', and signals to the rest of the characters that the Host finds similarities between the lascivious Daun John and the Monk of the pilgrimage. However, the Host's mocking frames the Monk within a paradigm of masculine qualities, particularly as a figure who would have no trouble in finding a partner should he so desire. He is described as 'nat lyk a penant or a goost', as 'som officer', and a 'worthy sexteyn' (VII.1934–6), characteristics venerated in secular masculinities but antithetical to the expected conduct of a monk. This distinction is presented by the Host, who says the Monk is 'No povre cloysterer, ne no novys, But a governour, wily and wys', containing 'brawnes and of bones' (VII.1939–41). The comment that he is a 'wel-farynge persone for the nones' (VII.1942) employs paranomasia on the phrase, 'for the nones', meaning for all, and 'for the nonnes', relating to the inhabitants of a convent.

It is in this section that Chaucer's criticism of sacerdotal celibacy and emphasis on the Monk's indiscretions are most pronounced as the Host, having presented the Monk as a fine specimen of masculinity, then questions what 'confusioun that first thee broghte unto religioun' (VII.1943–4). He further describes the virility of the Monk, stating that he 'woldest han been a tredefowel aright' (VII.1945) had he not chosen a life of religious celibacy. The joke is of course that the rest of the pilgrims are aware of the Monk's sexual transgressions and the comment that, had the Monk 'as greet a leeve as thou hast myght To parfourne al thy lust in engendrure' (VII.1947) functions as a satirical aside to the crowd. The Host continues and offers his thoughts on the practice of clerical celibacy, stating if 'I were a pope', every 'myghty man' would have a wife, 'for al the world is lorn' (VII.1950–3).

The notion that Chaucer's Monk represents a fallen figure engaged in penitential pilgrimage is seen in 'The Monk's Tale'. The Monk's recitation of seventeen tragedies, stories of the fall of great men and women, based on Boccaccio's *De Casibus Virorum Illustrium*, acts as his admission of sin and lament against the lascivious actions that have brought him social ostracism. The Monk states that 'tragedies wol I telle Of whiche I have an hundred in my celle' (VII.1971–2). This reference to the Monk as having 'a hundred tragedies' functions as an admission of guilt, and references the social downfall his actions have caused. The Monk's description of tragedy is particularly noteworthy:

> Of hym that stood in greet prosperitee
> And is yfallen out of heigh degree
> Into myserie, and endeth wrecchedly
> (VII.1975–7)

Not only does ‘The Monk’s Tale’ serve as a penitential action, the content of the tragic stories he describes may be seen to reflect the proclivity for sexual conduct that has brought about his own fall, particularly the notion that associating with women may lead a monk to sin and ruin. Crucially, the Monk is a fallen figure due to the pursuit of qualities viewed as venerable characteristics within a paradigm of secular masculinities.

‘The Monk’s Tale’ may be seen to target the type of fall or tragedy for which women have traditionally been blamed. However, crucially two of the figures used to convey this message are characters noted for masculine qualities of strength and brutality. The story of Samson is one example which frames female interaction as the path to damnation. The text has the Monk describe how the Old Testament figure was a ‘noble almyghty championn’ who ‘slow and al torente the leoun’ (VII.2023–5). However, the Monk describes Delilah as his ‘false wyf’ (VII.2027) and one who seeks to ‘preye til she his conseil knew’ (VII.2027). The Monk describes Samson’s weakness, that:

> Ne on his heed cam rasour noon, ne sheere,
> By precept of the messager divyn,
> For alle hise strengthes in hise heeres weere.
> (VII.2056–8)

With this, the Monk tells of the treachery of Delilah, and how she conspired to cut the hair of Samson when she discovered that this was the source of his strength. The Monk is in no doubt as to who is to blame for Samson’s downfall, and describes how ‘wommen shal hym bryngen to meschaunce’ (VII.2062). This example mirrors the castigation he receives for his sexual interactions. It is as if the Monk laments the notion that his activities have been discovered when he states, ‘Beth war by this ensample oold and playn that no men telle hir conseil til hir wyves’ (VII.2091–2). This warning, a fairly commonplace one among medieval authors in general, not to let women know secrets or they will ruin you, may be a misogynistic conclusion made by one who has fallen from a position of status due to sexual transgression: ‘All the Monk can draw from the Gaza episode is a reflection that that women were to blame for Samson’s ruin’.[26]

---

[26] D. J. Wurtele, ‘Chaucer’s Monk: an errant exegete’, *Jour. Literature & Theology*, i (1987), 191–208, at p. 210.

A second portrait by the Monk in which the cause of tragic downfall may be seen to be the interaction with females is the discussion of Hercules, particularly Chaucer's retelling of the story of the Cloak of Nessus. The tale discusses how Hercules' mistress, Dianira, fetched a shirt for her partner, that of Nessus. When worn, however, this shirt causes the skin to be torn from Hercules' back, and it is in this torment that the classical figure is forced to throw himself to the flames to escape the pain. The text describes how he 'wered it half a day' and 'It made his flessh al from hise bones falle … Til that his flessh was for the venym blaked' (VII.2125–31). It is of interest that the Monk's retelling of this episode 'omits a crucial detail: the familiar story of Dianira's jealousy caused by Hercules's degrading love affair with Eolen',[27] as if to remove any discussion of adultery from the narrative in favour of presenting a sinful woman. The effect of this is to remove male sexual desire from the episode, almost as if the Monk wishes to limit any admission of culpability in regard to his fallen state. That the fatal wounds are inflicted by the Cloak of Nessus has further meaning in regard to the Monk, whose clothing acts as a public indicator of his vocation. It is in the Monk's attire that vows of chastity and poverty are communicated, and it is due to the Monk's failure to meet these obligations that he is metaphorically 'burned'. It is also of note that the expensive accessories that the Monk presents further compound his disobedience. It is through the pursuit of illicit sex and the wearing of improper attire that the Monk is condemned and must endure a certain 'social death by his own hand', mirroring the fate of Samson.

The notion that the Monk is a figure who has been mocked throughout Fragment VII and is, by the time of his tale, quite weary, may be seen in the Host's call for him to cease his speech. The Host states that 'Youre tale anoyeth al this compaignye', is 'nat worth a boterflye' (VII.2789–90), and encourages the Monk to tell another tale. However, the Monk has had enough of the taunting aimed at him by his fellow pilgrims and declares that he has, finally, 'no lust to pleye' (VII.2806). The shaming of the Monk first results in his morose recitation of tales of fallen men, acts as a criticism of his lack of monastic celibacy, and finally bursts his self-importance.

The character of the Nun's Priest is pronounced and, despite not having a portrait in *The General Prologue*, his genial exchange with the Host and the tale he tells (a worthy competitor to win the overall tale-telling contest) creates a jovial, yet pious, figure 'keen and alert in mind and body'.[28] The

---

[27] J. D. Zatta, 'Chaucer's Monk: a mighty hunter before the Lord', *Chaucer Review*, xxix (1994), 111–33, at p. 119.

[28] Hemingway, 'Chaucer's Monk and Nun's Priest', p. 480.

Nun’s Priest elicits the same commentary from the Host on the celibacy of religious figures. This character, however, contrasts with the Monk in that he is a dedicated adherent to the expectations of celibacy his vocation demands. That the Nun’s Priest juxtaposes this can be seen in the invitation of the Host that he may tell his tale. Whereas the Monk was taunted with the moniker ‘Daun John’ in relation to ‘The Shipman’s Tale’, the Host labels the Nun’s Priest, ‘thou, sir John’ (VIIl.2810), imparting an increased nobility and making the clear distinction from the fallen ‘Daun John’. The Nun’s Priest also juxtaposes the Monk in relation to his horse that is seen to be ‘bothe foul and lene’, unlike the dainty horses of the Monk. The tale he tells also differs greatly from the Monk’s tragedies and ‘The Nun’s Priest’s Tale’ of Chauntecleer stands as one of the most memorable and technically accomplished of the text. In this regard the Nun’s Priest adheres to the Host’s request that he, ‘Telle us swich thyng as may oure hertes glade’ (VII.2811). The text alludes to the distinction between the character of the Monk and the Nun’s Priest when it repeats the labelling of the Nun’s Priest as, ‘This sweete preest, this goodly man sir John’ (VII.2820).

‘The Nun’s Priests Tale’ may be said to contain references to moral virtue that anticipate the presentation of the Nun’s Priest as an adherent to the expectations of the priesthood. The widow, for example, who owns the farm on which Chauntecleer and Pertelote perform their beast fable/dream vision is presented in venerable terms as one who ‘ladde a ful symple lyf’ (VII.2826) dedicated to husbandry. The widow is seen to live in a state of poverty, with, a ‘ful sooty’ home and a small collection of farm animals; she is seen to consume a simple diet, juxtaposing the rich diets of the Monk who has a ‘love of a fat swan for dinner’:[29]

> No wyn ne drank she, neither whit ne reed,
> Hir bord was served moost with whit and blak,
> Milk and broun breed, in which she foond no lak,
> Seynd bacoun, and somtyme an ey or tweye
> (VII.2842–5)

This demonstration of the widow’s piety may open up discussion on the figure of Chauntecleer, and how his voice ‘murier than the murie orgon’ (VII.2849), his pride, and his ‘sevene wyves walkynge by his syde’ (VII.3192), which may be a device to further mock the lasciviousness of the Monk.[30] The Nun’s Priest makes reference to ‘the book of Launcelot de Lake’ and states that, ‘wommen holde [it] in ful greet reverence’ (VII.3212–3), as if accusing the females of the world of venerating a story on adultery. That the Nun's Priest views women as a path to sin is something that may be taken from his tale. As Paul Shallers noted, 'the deft manner in which he simultaneously compliments and criticizes women implies his mastery of the ironic voice'.[31]

---

[29] M. W. Grose, *Chaucer* (1967), p. 32.

[30] For further discussion on the criticism of the Monk expressed in the character of Chauntecleer, see Hemingway, ‘Chaucer’s Monk and Nun’s Priest’, p. 481.

The Nun's Priest makes several 'antifeminist' comments, particularly generalizations about the benefit of a woman's advice. Indeed, the Nun's Priest, unlike the Monk, directly implicates Eve in the narrative of the Fall:

> Wommennes conseils been ful ofte colde;
> Wommannes conseil broghte us first to wo,
> And made Adam fro Paradys to go
> (VII.3256–8)

The Nun's Priest attempts to deflect from these comments, stating that he 'seye it in my game' (VII.3262). However, he continues and seeks to direct those interested towards scriptural or classical sources that make a derogatory case for the role of women. The Nun's Priest directs those to 'Rede auctours, wher they trete of swich mateere, and what they seyn of wommen ye may heere' (VII.3263–4), deflecting from his own sense of ownership of such a comment by putting the words in the beak of Chauntecleer: 'Thise been the cokkes wordes, and nat myne' (VII.3265). The seriousness of the Nun's Priest is not masked, and he advises that the audience extrapolate the moral instruction of the tale: 'Taketh the moralite, goode men' (VII.3440). The Nun's Priest's closing address that God, 'make us alle goode men, And brynge us to his heighe blisse. Amen' (VII.3445–6) may be taken as a rejection of sexual activity, and in support of his vows of chastity.

It certainly does not escape the Host that the Nun's Priest has demonstrated his own chastity and piety within the Prologue to, and text of, 'The Nun's Priest's Tale'. The Host repeats his assessment of the Monk towards the Nun's Priest, although adds the qualifier 'if thou were seculer' to his statement 'Thou woldest ben a trede-foul aright' (VII.3450–1). The Host compliments the large neck and large breast of the Nun's Priest, and states that he 'nedeth nat his colour for to dyen With brasile, ne with greyn of Portyngale' (VII.3458–9), a remark directed at the Monk's need for fine clothing. Ultimately, the Host states that, should the Nun's Priest have the desire, he would have little 'nede of hennes,' or little trouble finding a female. The model presented within this pair of pilgrims, and across Fragment VII, is one of juxtaposition. The Nun's Priest may have the charisma to attract a mate, but his piety forbids it. The Monk it seems has sought female company, and now endures the possible misery of rejection from his order.

---

[31] A. P. Shallers, 'The Nun's Priest's Tale: an ironic exemplum', *English Literary History*, xlii (1975), 319–37, at p. 321.

Chaucer, in the figure of the Monk, presents a character who occupies the margins between the expected behaviour and conduct of those in a religious vocation and the reality of the transgressing, sinful, human. Within *The General Prologue,* Chaucer constructs a character who has disobeyed the central tenets of his order in regard to his attire, adornments and favouring of secular activities commonly associated with the masculine pursuits of the nobility. As Quinn commented, the Monk 'expresses outright contempt for his vows – poverty, chastity, obedience, labor, and claustration'.[32] However, it is through allusion to sexual transgressions that are implied in the depiction of the Monk as being a keen hunter that this character is implicated in the more grievous sin of abandoning chastity. It is here that the text explores the notion of a liminal space between position and deposition and the representation of the despairing monastic figure becomes indicative of those who have been expelled or disciplined from a prominent social role. Through exploration of the continued narrative of Fragment VII in relation to the information presented within *The General Prologue*, it is seen that the Monk is not only exposed in his sin, but that he must suffer the mocking of his fellow pilgrims, a reflection of the ostracism and repercussions that his actions may already have brought. In this regard it is seen that the Monk suffers due to his pursuit of actions or activities commonly celebrated within the construct of secular masculinities. Here the position of monastic figures as embodying a liminal gendered space is exposed by the Monk's inability to abide by the expected behaviours of his vocation. As Crocker noted, 'if gender is put under visible pressure, it causes trouble, both for those who seek to fix its borders and for those who are caught in the snares set by would-be agents'.[33] It is Chaucer's Monk who acts beyond the fixed borders of his social position in regard to gender and sexuality and it can be seen in the penitential lament of 'The Monk's Tale', as well as the taunting of his fellow pilgrims, that he is indeed caught in such set snares; the visible yet liminal gender implied by his monastic attire has been soiled by conceptions of a medieval secular masculinity that he has failed to reject.

---

[32] Quinn, 'Religion in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*', p. 61.

[33] Crocker, *Visions of Manhood*, p. 11.

8. The feminine mystic: Margery Kempe's pilgrimage to Rome as an *imitatio Birgittae*

Einat Klafter

Margery Kempe, the lay-mystic pilgrim and mother of fourteen from Bishop's Lynn (today King's Lynn) in East Anglia, arrived in Rome in August 1414 and remained there until after Easter 1415 – a stay of over nine months. This was Margery's longest sojourn in any one place outside of 'her own natyf land'.[1] Kempe's text, *The Book of Margery Kempe*,[2] dedicates a considerable amount of attention to this episode, twelve chapters (31–42), to recount the visions and mystical experiences of her alter ego Margery in Rome, as well as the people she encountered and the places she visited. This is considerably longer than Kempe's account of her pilgrimage to the Holy Land (chapters 28–30) or any other single place.

This emphasis is not surprising. Rome was an important and a transformative episode in Kempe's spiritual development, central to the pursuit of her vocation as a mystic–holy woman, and the site of several key events in her life.[3] Rome was where she was finally able to be 'clad

---

[1] M. Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. B. Windeatt (Cambridge, 2004), p. 211 (l. 3278). All quotations are taken from this version, unless otherwise stipulated. Throughout the text I will refer to Kempe's text as *The Book.*

[2] *The Book of Margery Kempe* opens with a poem written by Kempe's amanuensis outlining how the text came into existence, its content and purpose. My reading of *The Book* assumes that both Margery Kempe and her scribe existed, in contrast to Lynn Staley's argument that Kempe simply employed 'the trope of a scribe' *in lieu* of an actual one. It also recognizes that it is impossible to fully determine the level of input and control that scribe may have had. However, this does not impact on the content of my analysis of the text. At the same time, I find Staley's distinction between 'Margery, the subject, and Kempe her author', useful, and employ it throughout this chapter, divorced from Staley's general argument regarding Kempe and her scribe (L. Staley, *Margery Kempe's Dissenting Fictions* (University Park, Penn., 1994), p. 3 and p. 37).

[3] On Margery's pilgrimage to Rome and its centrality to Kempe's narrative and vocation, see e.g.: N. K. Yoshikawa, *Margery Kempe's Meditations: the Context of Medieval Devotional Literature, Liturgy and Iconography* (Cardiff, 2007); N. K. Yoshikawa, 'Margery Kempe's mystical marriage and Roman sojourn: influence of St. Bridget of Sweden', *Reading Medieval Studies*, xxviii (2002), 39–58; R. S. McIntyre, 'Margery's "mixed life": place pilgrimage and

E. Klafter, 'The feminine mystic: Margery Kempe's pilgrimage to Rome as an *imitatio Birgitta*', in *Gender in medieval places, spaces and thresholds*, ed. V. Blud, D. Heath and E. Klafter (2018), pp. 123–36.

al in white, liche as sche was comawndyd for to do yerys beforn in hir sowle be revelacyon'.[4] It is the location of her mystical marriage to the *Godhede*, officially making her a *sponsa Dei.*[5] It was also where she was able to connect with St. Bridget of Sweden, her main role model, by, among other things, adopting voluntary poverty, living among the poor of Rome, and performing charitable acts to aid the needy.

What is surprising is that Kempe's dense account of Margery's experiences in Rome does not mention the many relics, artefacts and indulgences that the Eternal City had to offer the pious, such as the famous Veil of Veronica,[6] referenced by Julian of Norwich from her cell in England.[7] Thus, her account of Rome offers her readers something very different from the pilgrimage guides and accounts of the period with which she would have been familiar. One of these accounts was the *Stacions of Rome*,[8] which offers a detailed account of the indulgences that one could accumulate by simply climbing the steps of St. Peter's Basilica or through viewing relics like the Vernicle:[9]

> Whon þe vernicle schewed is/ Gret pardon forsoþe þer is I wis þreo þousend ȝer as I ow telle/ To Men þat in þe Cite dwelle/ And men þat dwelle be sideward Nyne þousend ȝer schal ben heore part/ And þou þat passest ouer þe séé/ Twelue þousend ȝer is granted to þe/ And þerto þow schalt winne more/ þe þridde part for-ȝiuenes of al þi sore/ In lentone is an holy grace/ Vche pardon is doubled in þat place.[10]

---

the problem of genre in *The Book of Margery Kempe*', *English Studies*, lxxxix (2008), 643–61; L. L. Howes, 'Romancing the city: Margery Kempe in Rome', *Studies in Philology*, cxi (2014), 680–90; W. E. Smith, *Spiritual Marriage and Visionary Experience in Margery Kempe, "Eliza's Babes", and Anne Wentworth* (Indiana University Ph.D., 2010).

[4] Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, p. 181 (ll. 2603–605).

[5] 'the Fadyr seyd to this creatur: "Dowtyr, I wil han the weddyd to my Godhede, for I schal schewyn the my prevyteys and my cownselys, for thu schalt wonyn wyth me wythowtyn ende"' (Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, p. 190 (ll. 2816–18)). Margery marries the *Godhede* and not Christ, as was the traditional convention within the saintly texts and lives of female mystics, such as St. Catherine of Siena and St. Birgitta of Sweden.

[6] Margery was present in Rome for the Ostentation of the *sudarium*, 16 Jan., and would have had the opportunity to both see the relic and collect the indulgences associated with it. A. Goodman, *Margery Kempe and Her World* (2002), p. 196.

[7] Julian of Norwich, *A Book of Showings to the Anchoress Julian of Norwich, Part Two*, ed. E. Colledge and W. James (Toronto, 1978), pp. 327–9.

[8] *The Stacions of Rome, Pilgrims Sea-Voyage, and Clene Maydenhod*, ed. F. J. Furnivall and W. M. Rossetti (1866).

[9] J. F. Champ, *The English Pilgrimage to Rome: a Dwelling for the Soul* (Leominster, 2000), pp. 40–2; S. Salih, 'Two travellers' tales', in *Medieval East Anglia*, ed. C. Harper-Bill (Woodbridge, 2005), pp. 318–31.

[10] Furnivall and Rossetti, *The Stacions of Rome*, p. 3.

Kempe's account of Rome is also very different from what she offers in connection to Margery's pilgrimage to the Holy Land, which recounts the various sites she visited, what she saw, and five places where plenary remission could be obtained:

> In the Mownt Syon is a place wher owyr wesch hys disciplys fete, and a lityl therfro he mad hys Mawnde wyth hys disciplys… And so sche was wyth gret devocyon, wyth plenteuows teerys, and wyth boystows sobbyngys, for in this place is plenyr remyssyon. And so is in other iiii placys in the Tempyl. On is in the Mownt of Calvarye; another at the grave wher owyr Lord was beriid; the thridde is at the marbyl ston that hys preciows body was leyd on whan it was takyn of the cros; the ferd is ther the holy cros was beriid, and in many other placys of Jerusalem.[11]

It is possible that Margery's omission of the indulgences that Rome had to offer stemmed simply from a lack of interest or necessity. In Jerusalem, Christ had informed her that she no longer needed to collect indulgences to gain pardon to enter Heaven.[12] However, this was also the case when Margery visited Assisi en route to Rome, and she described the 'plenyr remyssyon' that could be attained there on Lammas Day at the chapel of the Portiuncula, and how she viewed 'owyr Ladys kerche' in the town.[13]

Of course, there is no way to know for certain why Kempe omitted mentioning the indulgences that the pious could obtain in Rome. What is noteworthy is what she does mention and what she employs *in lieu* of these objects, and how Margery was able to access the spiritual benefits of Rome and connect with the divine there without undertaking the set circuit of papal churches that constitutes the pilgrimage to Rome. Instead of relics and indulgences, Kempe's account of Rome is densely populated with the people Margery encountered and interacted with, as well as the traces and remnants left behind by St. Bridget, who spent the last twenty-three years of her life in Rome, from 1350 to 1373 (the year Kempe was born).

---

[11] Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, p. 170 (ll. 2338–50).

[12] Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, pp. 170–1 (ll. 2359–64), p. 101 (ll. 1003–4).

[13] 'Upon a tyme, as this creatur was in cherche at Assyse, ther was schewyd owyr Ladys kerche whech sche weryd her in erthe, wyth gret lygth and gret reverens. than this creatur had gret devocyon. sche wept, sche sobbyd, sche cryed wyth gret plente of teerys and many holy thowtys. Sche was ther also on Lammes Day, whan ther is gret pardon of plenyr remyssyon, for to purchasyn grace, mercy, and foryevenes for hirself, for alle hir frendys, for alle hir enmys, and for alle the sowlys in purgatory.' (Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, pp. 180–1 (ll. 2583–90)). She shared these viewing experiences with both St. Birgitta of Sweden and St. Angela of Foligno. Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, pp. 180–1; D. Russell, 'Margery Kempe and Caterina Benincasa: female mystics in England and Italy', *Textus*, xxiv (2011), 449–61, at p. 458.

The importance of St. Bridget in Kempe's construction of her saintly–vocational persona as part of the argument she puts forth for her own sainthood, and by extension the Swedish saint's influence on Kempe's construction of Margery's transformative pilgrimage to Rome, have been established by scholars such as Julia Bolton Holloway, Naoë Yoshikawa, Sylvia Schein and others.[14] However, their research mostly focused on Margery's mystical marriage in Rome as being her main form of *imitatio Birgittae*, examining Kempe's text primarily in relation to St. Bridget's *Liber Celestis*. Their scholarship only briefly touches upon Kempe's treatment of the poor and her charitable acts in Rome, and glosses over how unique her account of poverty and begging in Rome is.

Looking at the treatment of the poor in Rome in relation to *The Book* as a whole, this chapter seeks to show that Kempe's embracing of poverty, along with her interest in and care of the poor during her Roman sojourn are byproducts of Kempe's association of Rome with St. Bridget, which merges and conflates the two. In doing so, Kempe bypasses the traditional and well-established association of Rome with saints Peter and Paul, the early martyrs of the Church, and Christ's relics from the Holy Land. She puts forth an argument, through her own pilgrimage account, for Rome as the city of St. Bridget, in which the pious can connect with the Swedish saint and gain spiritual edification by walking in her footsteps, guided by her life's narrative. This resembles how Jerusalem constitutes the stage upon which the pious could connect with and recreate the historical narrative of Christ and his Passion.[15] For Kempe, Bridget is to Rome as Jesus is to Jerusalem.

As mentioned, aside from Margery's time in Rome, Kempe's text has an ambivalent relationship with poverty. While Margery more than once finds herself in need of financial assistance, primarily during her pilgrimages, she is not overly interested in the poverty of others, nor offers positive descriptions of the poor.[16] As a rule, whenever Margery speaks of or engages with the poor – a very rare occurrence in the text – the scene is not framed in a favourable light. A good example of this is found in Margery's description of the 'company of powr folke',[17] with whom she travelled to Aachen (bk. II), after her original pilgrimage companions abandoned her:

---

[14] J. B. Holloway, 'Bride, Margery, Julian, and Alice: Bridget of Sweden's textual community in medieval England', in *Margery Kempe: a Book of Essays*, ed. S. J. McEntire (New York, 1992), pp. 203–22; Yoshikawa, 'Margery Kempe's mystical marriage'; S. Schein, 'Bridget of Sweden, Margery Kempe and women's Jerusalem pilgrimages in the middle ages', *Mediterranean Historical Review*, xiv (1999), pp. 44–58; G. Cleve, 'Margery Kempe: a Scandinavian influence in medieval England?', in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: v*, ed. M. Glasscoe (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 163–78; and J. Wilson, 'Communities of dissent: the secular and ecclesiastical communities of Margery Kempe's *Book*', in *Medieval Women in their Communities*, ed. D. Watt (Toronto, 1997), pp. 155–85.

[15] N. Hopenwasser, 'Margery Kempe, St. Bridget, and Marguerite d'Oignt: the visionary writer as shaman', in McEntire, *Margery Kempe: a Book of Essays*, pp. 165–88, at p. 170.

[16] On *The Book*'s complicated relationship with questions of poverty, see e.g.: P. H.

> sche was receyvyd into a company of powr folke, and whan thei comyn to any towne, sche bowte hir mete and hir felaschep went on beggyng. Whan thei wer wythowtyn the townys, hir felaschep dedyn of her clothys, and, sittyng nakyd, pykyd hem. Nede compellyd hir to abydyn hem and prolongyn hir jurné and ben at meche mor cost than sche schulde ellys a ben. Thys creatur was abavyd to putte of hir clothis as hyr felawys dedyn, and therfor sche thorw hir comownyng had part of her vermyn and was betyn and stongyn ful evyl bothe day and nyght tyl God sent hir other felaschep.[18]

This was not a positive encounter for Margery, leaving her counting the days till she could join a different company of pilgrims, and recounting how her companions gave her fleas. Margery's tone seems to be one of disgust and discomfort, despite the fact that on the whole these pilgrims treated her very well, like one of their own, much better than any of her other travelling fellowships. These were not her preferred choice of travelling partners and, as Kate Crassons noted, she associated with them only as a last resort.[19]

This negative tone is found in other places throughout *The Book* and may be connected to the fact that, in late medieval England, poverty and begging had become charged subjects. This cultural shift included the passing of laws that criminalized able-bodied begging and indiscriminate charity. In this context, labour became a sign of virtue and poverty an indicator and byproduct of idleness and other associated sins. It is possible that Kempe was simply reflecting that cultural shift, or at the very least was aware of those concerns and anxieties. This is also apparent in the inclusion in her text of a detailed account (chapter 24) of criminal able-bodied begging in which her scribe was swindled by a young man fraudulently presenting himself as being in need and asking for financial assistance.[20] This episode serves as an example of how Kempe's text seems to be aligned with the

---

Cullum, '"Yf Lak of Charyte Be Not Ower Hynderawnce": Margery Kempe, Lynn, and the practice of the spiritual and bodily works of mercy', in *A Companion to the Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. J. H. Arnold and K. J. Lewis (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 177–94; K. Crassons, *The Claims of Poverty: Literature, Culture, and Ideology in Late Medieval England* (Notre Dame, 2010); S. Salih, 'Margery's bodies: piety, work and penance', in Arnold and Lewis, *A Companion to the Book of Margery Kempe*, pp. 161–76.

[17] Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, p. 406 (ll. 7978).

[18] Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, p. 407 (ll. 7983–92).

[19] Crassons, *The Claims of Poverty*, pp. 211–12.

[20] Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, pp. 142–6.

reproaching of able-bodied begging as opposed to the true need of poor neighbours that she knew and trusted to be in need of charity.[21]

The notable exception to *The Book*'s generally dismissive or negative stance towards poverty and begging is found in Margery's pilgrimage to Rome, which Crassons describes as presenting 'an especially concentrated portrait of poverty'.[22] In Rome, both her own voluntary poverty and the involuntary poverty of others constitute an important component of her experience, and are framed in a positive light. It is through poverty that she locates, reaffirms and connects with the sanctity of Rome:

> And than sche ros up and went forth in Rome and sey meche poverte among the pepyl. And than sche thankyd God hyly of the poverte that sche was in, trostyng therthorw to be partynyr wyth hem in meryte.[23]

Rome is also the only place where Margery mentions encountering the poor as an urban and everyday phenomenon, which leads to the question of what was so special about the poor of Rome. The poor could be encountered anywhere; Kempe did not need to travel beyond Bishop's Lynn to meet them, embrace poverty, or to fully commit to their service and care. This positive view of poverty is site specific, which can explain why it is not found elsewhere in *The Book*. It is not a token or *habitus* that Margery takes with her, as a relic, when she departs from Rome. This, then, begs the follow-up question: why is there such a strong association between Rome and poverty in Kempe's text? I would argue that this is a byproduct of Kempe's conflation of Rome with the figure of St. Bridget, whose *vitae* – and canonization documents – mention her voluntary poverty, charitable acts and care of the poor, including begging in the streets on their behalf, among her important character traits.[24]

---

[21] Crassons, *The Claims of Poverty*, pp. 5–6; M. Fitzgibbons, 'Poverty, dignity, and lay spirituality in Pore Caitif and Jacob's Well', *Medium Aevum*, lxxvii (2008), 231–2; M. Rubin, 'The poor', in *Fifteenth-Century Attitudes: Perceptions of Society in Late Medieval England*, ed. R. Horrox (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 169–82; Cullum, '"Yf Lak of Charyte Be Not Ower Hynderawnce"', p. 188.

[22] Crassons, *The Claims of Poverty*, p. 184.

[23] Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, p. 202 (ll. 3090–4).

[24] Kempe mentions both Bridget and her text several times throughout *The Book*, e.g.: 'red to hir many a good boke of hy contemplacyon and other bokys, as the Bybyl wyth doctowrys thereupon, Seynt Brydys boke, Hyltons boke, Boneventur, *Stimulus Amoris*, *Incendium Amoris*, and swech other' (Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, p. 280 (ll. 4817–21)). It is safe to assume that Margery would have been familiar with Birgitta's account of Rome, as it was translated into the Middle English version of her Revelations, the *Liber Celestis*.

The Bridget-centric nature and focus of Margery's pilgrimage through Rome can be gleaned from what constitutes the only holy structure described in any detail in Kempe's account: the chapel of St. Bridget – the saint's former abode in the Eternal City (Casa di Santa Brigida). Margery visited the site, on the saint's feast day, in the hopes of getting closer to and learning more about Bridget. While there she sought out and found people who knew the saint and could speak of her:

> …this creatur spak wyth Seynt Brydys mayden in Rome, but sche couwd not undirstondyn what sche seyd. Than had sche a man that cowed undirstondyn hir langage, and that an tolde Seynt Bryrigptys mayden what this creatur seyde and how sche askyd after Seynt Brigypt, hir lady. Than the mayden seyd that hir lady, Seynt Brigypt, was goodly and meke to every creatur, and that sche had a lawhyng cher. And also the good man wher this creature was at hoste telde hir that he knew hir hys own selfe, but he wend lityl that sche had ben so holy a woman as sche was, for sche was evyr homly and goodly to alle creaturys that woldyn spekyn wyth hir. Sche was in the chawmbre that Seynt Brigypt deyd in, and herd a Dewsche preste prechyn of hir therin, and of hir revalacyonys and of hir maner of levyng, and sche knelyd also on the ston on the which owr Lord aperyd to Seynt Brigypte and telde hir what day sche schuld deyn on. And this was on of Seynt Brigypts days that the creatur was in hir chapel, which befortyme was hir chawmbre that sche deyd in.[25]

This passage is unique in Kempe's account of her experiences in Rome. The level of detail and the care taken to describe the place and her experience there stands out even when compared to Margery's descriptive account of the historical sites of the Holy Land. No other place, no other interior space, is described in such detail – or any detail at all. For instance, the location of Margery's mystical marriage to the *Godhede*, the Church of the Holy Apostles ('the Postelys Cherch'),[26] is only mentioned by name.

Margery's pilgrimage to Rome was not undertaken in the footsteps of saints Peter and Paul, but in those of St. Bridget. Looking at her pilgrimage through Rome as mapped out according to accounts of St. Bridget's life can explain the unique and liminal nature of the poverty of Rome, as well as Kempe's lack of references to the indulgences that Rome had to offer. In effect, Kempe is putting forth an alternative route through Rome, one that is distinctly female in authorship and reference, through which the pious can connect with and benefit from the sanctity of the Eternal City. In Rome, Kempe employs Bridget's *vita*, instead of the pilgrimage guides, to create a road-map – pilgrimage circuit – that Margery can follow in order to access the sanctity of Rome and reap the spiritual benefits that the city offered.

---

[25] Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, pp. 204–5 (ll. 3118–35). Margery goes on to recount how God sent a tempest in protest of the poor level of worship that St. Birgitta received: 'Owr Lord sent swech tempestys of wyndys and reynes, and dyvers impressyons of eyrs, that thei that wer in the feldys and in her labowrys wythowtynforth were compellyd to entyr howsys in socowryng of her bodiis, to enchewyn dyvers perellys. Throw swech tokenys his creatur supposyd that owr Lord wold hys seyntys days schulde ben halwyd, and the seynt had in mor worship than sche was at that tyme' (ll. 3135–40).

[26] Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, p. 189 (l. 2810).

Rather than tour the stational churches and other landmarks to amass indulgences for herself and her kin, Margery followed and tried to recreate St. Bridget's life in Rome in a manner very reminiscent of the physical *imitatio Christi*, where the pious walk in the footsteps of Jesus through the Holy Land following the scriptural narrative. Margery connected to St. Bridget in Rome by emulating her saintly behaviour, including the Swedish saint's vow of poverty: 'Sho loued so greteli wilfull pouert þat all þat sho hade, sho put it into oþir mennes hands, and when sho wald haue oght to hirselfe or to ani oþir, sho suld aske it mekeli in þe name of Iesu Criste, als it had neuir bene hir awen'.[27]

In a similar manner, Margery took on the hardships of penury, giving all her money away, making her dependent on the kindness of strangers:[28]

> …this creatur was in Rome, owr Lord bad hir yevyn awey al hir good and mkyn hir bar for hys lofe. And anon sche, wyth a fervent desyr to plesyn God, yaf awey swech goods as sche had and sweche as sche had borwyd also of the broke-bakkyd man the went with hir.[29]

---

[27] Birgitta of Sweden, *The Liber Celestis of St. Bridget of Sweden*, p. 4.

[28] Kempe did not remain destitute for long. Immediately after taking up voluntary poverty she received assistance from a host of people in Rome: 'Afftyr that this creature had thus yovyn away hir good, and had neyther peny ne halfpenny to helpyn hirself wuth, as sche lay in Seynt Marcellys Chirche in Rome, thynkyng and sodying where sche schuld han hir levyng, in-as-much as sche had no sylver to cheys hir wythtal, owr Lord answeryd to hir mende and seyde: "Dowtyr, thu art not yet so powr as I was heng nakyd on the cros for thy lofe…thow hast cownseld other men to ben powr for my sake…But drede the not, dowtyr, for they is gold to-theward…I schal preyn my owyn modir to beggyn for the…drede the not. I have frendys in every cuntre andschal make my frendys to comfort the."… sche thankyd hym … risyng up, went forth in the street and met casualy wyth a good man … they fellyn in good comunicacyon … than he yaf hir mony, be the which sche was wel relevyd and comfortyd a good while' (Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, pp. 199–200 (ll. 3026–48)). This is only one example of the assistance that she received. Additionally, Margery's claims of begging for food may have been exaggerated. Margery was fed on Sundays by Dame Florentine, with whom she travelled from Assisi to Rome. Dame Florentine also supplied her with a hamper with enough food to make two days' worth of soup, a bottle filled with good wine and some money. Margery also dined with a pious young woman on Wednesdays, and twice a week with a Roman by the name of Marcello and his wife. Thus, she only had to 'beggyd hir mete fro dor to dore' about once a week. Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, p. 201 (ll. 3076–7).

[29] Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, p. 199 (ll. 3012–16).

Like St. Bridget, Margery also lived among the poor, and as an act of charity and penance took on the role of a servant to a poor, elderly woman. She begged for food for her and gave her own wine to her:

> …Schulde servyn an hold woman that was a poure creatur in Rome. And sche dede so sex wekys. Sche servyd hir as sche wolde a don owyr Lady. And sche had no bed to lyn in, ne no clothys to be cured wyth, saf hir own mentyl. And than was sche ful of vermyn and suffyrd gret peyn therwyth. Also sche fet hom watyr abd stykkys in her nekke for the poure woman and beggyd mete and wyn bothyn for hir. And when the pour womans wyn was sowr, this creatur hirself drank that sowr wyn, and yaf the powr woman good wyn that sche had bowt for hir owyn selfe.[30]

In her service to the impoverished woman Margery calls to mind St. Bridget's care for the sick and poor:

> She was of so grete & meruaylous mekenes that ofttymes she sat vnknowen with pore pylgrmes at the monastery of seynt Laurence in pamsperna in the cyte of Rome which is of the orde of seynt Clare & there she toke almes with them / Oft tymes with hir owne handes for goddes sake she repayred the clothes of pore men / & euery day in hir husbandes lyf she fedde xii pore men in hir house seruyd & mynystred to them hir selfe suche as they neded.[31]

While Margery's service was neither a prescribed nor enjoyable act, she accepted it and recognized the spiritual benefits of the exercise. Here the *vermyn* are described in a more matter-of-fact manner, as part of the physical component of her penance, and do not carry the scorn found in the account of the Aachen pilgrims, discussed above. She even likens her care of the old woman to her care of the Virgin Mary, recalling her meditational visions early in her conversion.[32]

Margery's attitude toward caring for the elderly woman in Rome stands in sharp contrast to how she describes her need to care for her wounded and ill husband, in his later life, which she did at the behest of Christ, who ordered her '…take hym hom and kepe hym for my lofe'.[33] Margery protested this request, and her description focuses on both the hardships involved and explicitly states that she saw this as punishment for her enjoyment of fleshly desires in her youth:

> sche toke hom hir husbond to hir and kept hym yerys aftyr as long as he levyd and had ful mech labowr wyth hym, for in hys last days he turnyd childisch

---

[30] Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, p. 189 (ll. 2800–9).

[31] T. Gascoigne, *Myroure of Oure Ladye*, ed. J. H. Blunt (1873), pp. lii–liii.

[32] Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, pp. 75–80.

[33] Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ch. 76 (l. 4271).

> agen and lakkyd reson that he cowd not don hys owyn esement to gon to a sege, er ellys he wolde not, but as a childe voydyd his natural digestyon in hys lynyn clothys ther he sat be the fyre er at the tabil, whethyr it wer, he wolde sparyn no place. And therfor was hir labowr meche the mor in waschyng and wryngyng and hir costage in fyryng and lettyd hir ful meche fro hir contemplacyon that many tymys sche schuld an yrkyd hir labowr saf sche bethowt hir how sche in hir yong age had ful many delectabyl thowtys, fleschly lustys, and inordinat lovys to hys persone. And therfor sche was glad to be ponischyd wyth the same persone…[34]

It is not that the woman was worthier or more deserving of Margery's care and attention than her husband, whom she was obliged to help, but that the service of the old woman in Rome both recalls St. Bridget's charitable acts and was done as part of Margery's site-specific *imitatio Birgittae* as a means by which to connect with the sanctity of Rome, spiritual benefits that the care of John did not offer her. The parallels between the two episodes, and the stark differences in Kempe's depiction of Margery's attitude towards these similar hardships, serve to illustrate again that service to the poor and needy was a liminal exercise, connected to the opportunity that Rome offered her to connect with St. Bridget, making it an important and key feature of her *imitatio Birgittae* in Rome. Serving the poor becomes part of the performance of pilgrimage, putting it on the same level as the well-established but semi-technical dictate that pilgrimage to Rome is enacted only once the pious have finished the pilgrimage circuit established by the Church. Margery's care of the elderly woman and her adoption of poverty are acts of devotion that connect her both to her role model and the special spiritual benefits of Rome. It is similar to how Jerusalem, as the city of Christ, offered Margery an opportunity to walk in his footsteps and perform an *imitatio Christi*, including symbolically reenacting the crucifixion with her body at Calvary. In Rome, the city of Bridget, Margery walks in Bridget's footsteps and physically mimics and imitates her life.

This makes care for the poor part of the performance of a devotional exercise, a means to an end, and transforms the people and especially the poor of Rome into alternative artefacts, stations on a self-established, unofficial pilgrimage route through Rome. They replace the Church-appointed objects and places that the pious employ to access the sanctity of Rome. However, they are not mere alternatives, they are upgrades. By nature of their being freely available and accessible – the streets are full of people and the poor – they enable Margery to freely access the divine without intervention or mediation, without the need to travel to a specific location, or at a specific time.

---

[34] Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ch. 76 (ll. 4280–7).

Even the most fleeting encounter, such as the sighting of men walking in the street, offers Margery the opportunity to access the spiritual power and benefits that the sacred site of Rome offers the pious, triggering a visioning of Christ:

> Whan sche sey women in Rome beryn children in her armys, yyf sche myth wetyn that thei wer ony men children, sche shuld than cryin, roryn and wepyn as thei sche had seyn Crist in hys childhode. And yf sche myth an had hir wille, oftyntymes sche wolde a takyn the childeryn owt of the moderys armys and a kyssed hem in the stede of Crist. And yyf sche sey a semly man, sche had gret peyn to lokyn on hym, les than sche myth a seyn hym that was bothe God and man. And therfor sche cryed many tymes and oftyn whan she met a semly man, and wept and sobbyd ful sor in the manhood of Crist as sche went in the stretys at Rome, that thei that seyn hir wondryd ful mych on hir, for thei knew not the cawse.[35]

Instead of communing with the divine through a viewing of the *Vultus Christi* as manifested in the Veil of Veronica, she is gifted the intense experience of seeing Christ everywhere in the young boys and the 'semly man' she encounters as she walks through the city. In this manner, the streets of Rome and its inhabitants are transformed from being secular or mundane objects into hallowed artefacts.

In transforming the urban cityscape of Rome, as a whole, into a *loca sancta*, Kempe treats the Eternal City in a similar manner to Jerusalem, where the city streets are also hallowed ground, as they enable the pious to walk in the footsteps of Jesus and to follow him through his life and his Passion. In Rome, Margery walks in the footprints that St. Bridget left, on her daily journeying through the city, to visit the various churches and holy sites. Moreover, in walking through the streets of Rome, forced to avert her eyes due to the powerful visions triggered by virtually any encounter, Kempe physically mirrors St. Bridget's habit of walking through the streets with her gaze dowcast to avoid looking at people's faces:

> Sho viset ofte times with grete trauell holi places in Rome, and sho thoght right wele þat time þat sho wald speke no worde to none bot if sho ware asked, and þan als shortli as sho couthe with honeste. Sho keped so wele hir een þat sho sawe bot right few in þe visage, and if þare ware ani likinge in hir seinge, sho wrote it vp to shriue hir þareof.[36]

---

[35] Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, pp. 190–1 (ll. 2823–35). Emphasis is mine.

[36] Birgitta of Sweden, *The Liber Celestis of St. Bridget of Sweden*, p. 4.

It is through these encounters that Kempe connects with the figure and memory of St. Bridget and with the spiritual benefits that Rome offered. For Kempe the two – St. Bridget and the spiritual benefits of Rome – are inseparable.

To conclude, in Rome, Kempe maps out a personal, Bridget-centered and uniquely female-oriented pilgrimage circuit that offers her readers alternative means by which they can access the sanctity of the Eternal City. However, this is not an alternative-for-alternative's-sake, it is part of Kempe's life-long argumentation for her own sanctity and proof of her divine authority. The personalized pilgrimage route that Margery relays and executes serves at one and the same time to authenticate St. Bridget's sanctity, which at the time was being debated – for the third time – at the Council of Constance and to authorize Kempe's own sanctity formulated in many ways in the image of the Swedish saint.[37]

This chapter argues that Kempe's focus on St. Bridget's charitable works, and specifically her *vitae* rather than her revelations was, at least in part, motivated by the canonization debated in Constance, where the grounds for St. Bridget's canonization were '… her virtuous way of life, supported by some documented miracles, *not* her visionary experiences and writings'.[38] Preoccupation with St. Bridget's character is also at the heart of Margery's visit to the Casa di Santa Brigida, where she not only describes the chapel and service that she witnessed, but also collects testimonials from those who knew St. Bridget. To some extent, Margery was contributing to the process of canonization, and re-advocating for Bridget's saintliness. Thus, Margery authenticates Bridget's character and sainthood, through the testimonies that she collects, in addition to emulating her saintly lifestyle.

In addition, it is contended that the canonization issues were also at the heart of Kempe's silence over the indulgences that the pious could collect in Rome, which does not stem from a lack of interest in accumulating remission, but from the fact that Rome lacked indulgences associated with Kempe's object of pilgrimage, St. Bridget. In the Holy Land, the sites mentioned are associated with Christ and his Passion, which stood at the heart of Kempe's pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Similarly, the site of and indulgences associated with the Portiuncula in Assisi are important in connection to St. Bridget and the Bridgettine Order. The Swedish saint visited the site, experienced a vision confirming the divine authenticity of the indulgence, and sought to receive this indulgence for her monastery in Vadstena. Later, the Brigittine Syon abbey also received this indulgence, called the Pardon of Syon.[39] The Portiuncula indulgence is the last one mentioned in connection to Kempe's pilgrimage to the Holy Land and Rome. It constitutes the last site that Margery would encounter where indulgences could be associated with St. Bridget. In Rome, there were no Bridget-related indulgences, as her canonization and its reconfirmation were still being discussed at the Council of Constance. Yet that does not alter Kempe's approach. Instead of following the male-authored and male-dominated traditional pilgrimage circuit in Rome, she sticks to her preferred vocational role model, creating almost *ex nihilo* an alternative, female-authored and female-oriented devotional route and offering novel tools for the devout to connect with the sanctity and the spiritual benefits of the Eternal City.

---

[37] D. Watt, 'Political prophecy in *The Book of Margery Kempe*', in Arnold and Lewis, *A Companion to the Book of Margery Kempe*, pp. 145–6, at p. 152; K. J. Lewis, 'Margery Kempe and saint making in later medieval England', in Arnold and Lewis, *A Companion to the Book of Margery Kempe*, pp. 195–215, at p. 213.

[38] Watt, 'Political prophecy', p. 152.

---

[39] R. W. Shaffern, 'Indulgences and saintly devotionalisms in the middle ages', *Catholic Historical Review*, lxxxiv (1998), 643–61, at pp. 656–7.

III. A woman’s place?

9. 'Unbynde her anoone':[1] the *Lives* of St. Margaret of Antioch and the lying-in space in late medieval England

Róisín Donohoe

Childbirth in the lying-in space was regarded as a routine part of life during the late middle ages and, therefore, for the most part went unrecorded. This chapter investigates three Middle English hagiographical accounts of the patron saint of childbirth, Margaret of Antioch which, it argues, yield significant insights into the experiences of its female audience within the hidden space of the lying-in room. Medical and theological perspectives on childbirth were generally neither intended for, nor read by, parturient medieval women. Therefore, an examination of texts *read* within, rather than *written* about, the lying-in room provides an important insight into the reality of the late medieval parturient experience.

In order to do this, the chapter first examines the practical aspects of the lying-in period, before briefly outlining the cult of Margaret in late medieval England. Three early to mid fifteenth-century English manuscripts of Margaret's life are considered, as each displays evidence of female household use: a copy of John Lydgate's early fifteenth-century poem *The Lyfe of Seynt Margarete*[2] and a copy of the thirteenth-century anonymous *Stanzaic Life of Margaret*,[3] as well as reference to the late fourteenth-century sermon on Margaret by John Mirk, from his collection *Festial*.[4] Apart from a textual examination of the trials of Margaret, the chapter will also draw on the physical evidence these texts provide and the ways in which parturient women interacted with them. The material aspects of Margaret's life and its use in the lying-in room will demonstrate a link between text and material, giving an insight into the experiences of the late medieval English lying-in space.

---

[1] 'and open her womb immediately': Add. MS. 4122, fos. 312–3, trans. S. L. Reames, *Middle English Legends of Women Saints* (Kalamazoo, Mich., 2003), p. 126.

[2] Durham University Library, MS. Cosin V.II.14, fos. 97v–106.

[3] Cambridge University Library, Add. MS. 4122, fos. 6–38v.

[4] Cambridge University Library, MS. Ff.II.38, fos. 37–8.

R. Donohoe, '"Unbynde her anoone": the *Lives* of St. Margaret of Antioch and the lying-in space in late medieval England', in *Gender in medieval places, spaces and thresholds*, ed. V. Blud, D. Heath and E. Klafter (2018), pp. 139–56.

The lying-in room

When an expectant mother was about to give birth, the women that she selected as her birth attendants would carefully prepare the lying-in room. These women, who were usually the family members and friends of the expectant mother, each had a specific role as dictated by the midwife. The space was fully enclosed by covering the walls and floors with tapestries and carpets (if the family was wealthy) and blocking windows, keyholes or any other crack in the room. The room was lit only by candles, as it was believed too much light would damage the newborn and strain the eyes of the labouring woman. This was an attempt to create both a physical and social demarcation of space, as the lying-in room became a womb in itself.[5]

This gendered space would continue to operate while the new mother remained in bed which, depending on her post-partum health and economic status, could last from three days to two weeks. After this, the mother went through a process of 'upsitting' in which the linen was changed for the first time and she received female visitors. This lasted from a week to ten days and was a period of collective female celebration and contemplation.[6] The final part of the lying-in period arrived when the woman left the womb of the lying-in room and moved freely about the house, but did not venture outdoors.

The deliberate and incremental procedures of the lying-in period were not merely ceremonial. They also testify to the extreme physical danger experienced by a woman giving birth in the late middle ages. Uncontrollable haemorrhaging, vaginal tearing and rupture, prolapsed uteruses and complications involving breech births were all risks associated with medieval childbirth. The likelihood of infection was also high, leading to 'childbed fever', known today as puerperal fever, which was responsible for the majority of maternal fatalities.

In a space which housed such dangers, the parturient woman's comfort, both physical and mental, was a priority. The early fifteenth-century physician Anthonius Guainerius's *Tractatus de matricibus* ('Treatise on the womb') recommended that: 'At the time of birth, it is good that the legend of blessed Margaret be read, that she have relics of the saints on her, and that you carry out briefly some familiar ceremonies in order to please your patient and the old woman'.[7]

---

[5] J. W. Hellwarth, *The Reproductive Unconscious in Late Medieval and Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2002), p. 8.

[6] A. Wilson, 'The ceremony of childbirth and its interpretation', in *Women as Mothers in Pre-Industrial England: Essay in Memory of Dorothy McLaren*, ed. V. Fildes (1990), pp. 69–107, at p. 75.

[7] *Tractatus de matricibus* 2.3–2.3v, trans. in H. R. Lemay, 'Women and the literature of

This suggests that accounts of Margaret's life were recognized as providing great comfort to parturient women in this sensitive space and her ceremonies were highly valued by midwives and their female patients.

The cult of Margaret

The roots of Margaret's cult can be traced to the Eastern Church, where she is known as St. Marina. Pilgrims travelling to Rome via the town of Bolsena (which held many relics of the saint) brought Margaret's cult to England.[8] Evidence of Margaret's cult in England is provided by multiple accounts of her martyrdom, dedication of churches, records of her relics and her depiction in religious art.[9] However, the most valuable evidence of the cult of Margaret in late medieval England is provided by the texts themselves.

The Mombritius tradition, one of six distinct Latin traditions of Margaret's life, became the source material for some of the most well-known Middle English lives, with manuscripts dating back to the ninth century.[10] These include the thirteenth-century *Seinte Margarete* of the anchoritic Katherine Group, the late thirteenth-century life in the *South English Legendary*, the thirteenth-century *Stanzaic Life of Margaret* and Jacopo de Voragine's collection of saints' lives *Legenda Aurea* (*c*.1260). In turn, the *Legenda Aurea* served as a source text for Mirk's *Festial* sermons and John Lydgate's fifteenth-century poem *The Lyfe of Seynt Margarete*.

From the fourteenth to the early sixteenth century, there was a significant increase and diversification in female book ownership, particularly among non-noble laywomen.[11] Groag Bell suggests that the 242 book-owning laywomen in the late middle ages that she identified were most likely to own a devotional item. Anne Wingfield (d.1500), daughter of Sir Robert Harling and East Anglian resident, borrowed and donated numerous devotional books. One of her books, the Harley 4012, in which her ownership is proclaimed with the words 'Thys ys the boke of dame Anne Wyngefeld of Har[l]yng',[12] contains the life of St. Margaret of Antioch.[13]

---

obstetrics and gynaecology', in J. T. Rosenthal, *Medieval Women and the Sources of Medieval History* (Athens, 1990), pp. 317–36, at p. 197.

[8] V. Ortenberg, *The English Church and the Continent in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries: Cultural, Spiritual and Artistic Exchanges* (Oxford, 1992), p. 119.

[9] See C. Pearce, 'The cult of St. Margaret of Antioch', *Feminist Theology: the Journal of Britain & Ireland School of Feminist Theology*, xvi (1997), 70–86, at p. 71.

[10] *The Old English Lives of St. Margaret*, ed. M. Clayton and H. Magennis (Cambridge, 1994).

[11] Hellwarth, *Reproductive Unconscious*, p. xx.

[12] British Library, Harley MS. 4012, fo. 153.

[13] Brit. Libr., Harley MS. 4012, fos. 124–30.

The lying-in narrative in the life of St. Margaret of Antioch

While subject to slight variation, the accounts of Margaret's life are similar. As a young girl, Margaret is sent by her pagan father to live with a Christian nurse, who inspires her to convert. When she refuses to marry the pagan prefect Olibrius, she is tortured and imprisoned (a common trope for early Christian martyrs). In this space she encounters a dragon that swallows her. She blesses herself and bursts from its stomach. Margaret subsequently encounters a demon, which she soundly defeats by throwing him to the ground and standing on his neck. Again refusing to marry Olibrius, she is tortured a second time and is finally beheaded. Before she is executed, she makes a final prayer, asking God to protect all travailing women in her name. The pagans watching her are converted and Margaret's head (or soul), is borne to heaven by angels, cementing her status as a virgin martyr.

Margaret's torture, her encounter with the dragon and demon and her execution are central to an understanding of the saint's late medieval parturient audience's experience. While these are typical hagiographic trials which reinforce her status as a virgin martyr who is resolute against the sexual advances of the masculine pagan, the saint also directly appeals to pregnant women. Margaret brought comfort to her parturient readers in three distinct ways: she is an inspiring figure, a sympathetic figure and a figure who spoke directly to her audience.

Female martyrs in hagiography represent the pinnacle of medieval Christian womanhood, and they were typically depicted as figures to emulate. Margaret's bravery and resolution in the face of torture and demonic foes could have encouraged a parturient woman who hoped to survive the pains of labour, the trauma of childbirth and the dangers of postpartum infection. The pain which Margaret endures during her first day of torture is graphic, even by hagiographical standards. The saint's ripped and torn body is characterized by an extreme effusion of blood, as it 'renne and rayle doun'[14] her skin. However, while she physically experiences pain, Margaret remains stoic throughout her torture. She is aware that she may die: 'Be assured that I haue no drede / To deye for him, and al my blode to shed'.[15] Her resolution in the face of inevitable suffering echoes late medieval prayer to Margaret to be used during childbirth: *'que Dieu vueilles pour moy prier / et doulcement luy supplier / que par pitué il me conforte / es douleurs qu'i fault que je porte'.*[16]

---

[14] 'run and flow down' (Cos. V.II.14, fo. 236, trans. Reames, *Middle English Legends*, p. 154).

[15] 'Be assured, I have no dread, to die for him and my blood to shed' (Cos. V.II.14, fos. 223–4, trans. Reames, *Middle English Legends*, p. 153).

[16] 'may you pray to God for me / and sweetly ask Him that He may comfort me through His pity / in the pain which I have to undergo' (P. Rézeau, *Les Prières aux Saints en français*

Such resolution in the face of danger is acknowledged when, in the *Stanzaic Life*, an incredulous Olibrius proclaims 'Ne geveth sche not a hawe; / For allee the peyne that ye her doon, sche sette not bye a strawe!'[17] Previously this phrase was used when he first approached Margaret, who was sitting with her fellow shepherdesses. His soldiers inform him that 'of alle thi posté sche gevys not a hawe!'[18] This language explicitly connects Margaret's emotional strength throughout her initial torture with the memory of a female community forged by her nurse. Through this memory, Margaret rejects Olibrius's pagan advances and his patriarchal power. Margaret is aware that this pain is superficial compared to the mortal danger she will later face in the prison cell; a woman who experiences the first pangs of labour also knows worse pain is yet to come.

Similarly, when Margaret encounters the demon, she is aware that she has already survived her greatest foe in the dragon and she is resolute in her actions. Battles between virgin martyrs and demons are common in hagiography.[19] Margaret launches an unusual assault in the *Stanzaic Life*, in which she leaps at the demon and 'with her wmpylle sche him bonde'.[20] Margaret's wimple is the strongest bond that the demon has ever endured and it disrupts his actions: '…thou bynde me with stele, / That I may… no woman with chylde do ylle'.[21] The saint reveals a sense of agency by using her wimple, the signifier of her femininity, to violently bind up the male demon and so protect women in childbirth.

Lydgate's portrayal of Margaret's assault shows a similar transformation. She explodes into action and 'cast him doun /… / Hir ryght fote she sette upon his bake'.[22] This echoes Christ's declaration to his apostles: 'Behold, I have given you power to tread upon serpents and scorpions' (Luke X: 19). Margaret triumphantly delivers her own rallying call: 'Remembre of thee how I have victorye / a clene mayde, by powere femynyne'.[23]

à la fin du Moyen Age (2 vols., Geneva, 1982–3), ii. 232, trans. in R. Blumenfeld-Kosinski, *Not of Women Born: Representations of Caesarean Birth in Medieval and Renaissance Culture* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1990), pp. 8–9).

[17] 'she does not give a hawthorn berry [something worthless] / For all the pain you have done to her' (Add. MS. 4122, fos. 131–2, trans. Reames, *Middle English Legends*, p. 151).

[18] 'of all your power she does not give a hawthorn berry!' (Add. MS. 4122, fo. 72, trans. Reames, *Middle English Legends*, p. 217).

[19] In particular, St. Juliana of Nicomedia's assault on the demon Belial is very similar to Margaret's assault.

[20] 'she bound him with her wimple' (Add. MS. 4122, fo. 196, trans. Reames, *Middle English Legends*, p. 122).

[21] 'you bind me with steel / So I may ... do no ill to a woman with child' (Add. MS. 4122, fos. 233–4, trans. Reames, *Middle English Legends*, p. 123).

[22] 'cast him down /… / Her right foot she set against his back' (Cos. V.II.14, fos. 311–15, trans. Reames, *Middle English Legends*, p. 156).

[23] 'Remember I have victory over you / a clean maid, by feminine power' (Cos. V.II.14,

The demon proclaims his shame at being defeated by 'a cely virgyne',[24] characterizing the saint's femininity as weak and negative. Margaret proudly provides an alternative language that is dominated by her wimple – 'powere femynyne' – and her new sense of movement, performing her own version of the upsitting ritual in her cell. Regardless of her 'lymmes sklendre',[25] Margaret uses her femininity to 'stand on the neck of life-threatening odds' for her parturient audience.[26]

While Margaret is a source of inspiration, she also evokes sympathy. Her composure, so integral to her dealings with Olibrius, is broken when she meets the dragon in the *Stanzaic Life*. The appearance of the dragon disrupts this 'assured and timeless utterance of the perfected saint speaking in the public language of God's church'.[27] Margaret becomes more like a frightened fifteen-year-old girl, turning pale with fear at the sight of the dragon: 'That mayde wexed alle greene as the gresse in someres tyde',[28] a phrase also found in earlier Latin lives. This echoes the remarks made in the Katherine Group's *Hali Meiðhad*[29] regarding pregnancy: '…Þi rudie neb schal leanin, ant ase gres grenin'[30] and suggests not only Margaret's fear but also a sense of physical illness.

Before Margaret encounters the dragon, an angel visits her in her cell and warns her that a dragon will appear. The angel anticipates Margaret's fear, comforts her to 'drede thou not it'[31] and assures her that she already has a place in heaven: 'Thi sete is made in heven'.[32] To her parturient audience, Margaret was not simply a remote saintly figure to be emulated, but a figure who spoke to them directly and to whom they could talk. In her final prayer, the saint promises to protect her followers, even in death, 'where ever the bodye lye'.[33] An unshriven death and burial was a very real fear for

---

fos. 316–17, trans. Reames, *Middle English Legends*, p. 156).

[24] 'an innocent virgin' (Cos. V.II.14, fo. 333, trans. Reames, *Middle English Legends*, p. 156).

[25] 'slender limbs' (Cos. V.II.14, fo. 329, trans. Reames, *Middle English Legends*, p. 156).

[26] C. Hill, '"Leave my virginity alone": the cult of St. Margaret of Antioch in Norwich. In pursuit of pragmatic piety', in *Medieval East Anglia*, ed. C. Harper-Bill (Woodbridge, 2005), pp. 225–45 at p. 228.

[27] Clayton and Magennis, *Lives of St. Margaret*, p. 32.

[28] 'That maid turned all green as the grass in summer time' (Add. MS. 4122, fo. 182, trans. Reames, *Middle English Legends*, p. 120).

[29] *Medieval English Prose for Women: Selections of the Katherine Group and Ancrene Wisse*, ed. J. Wogan-Browne and B. Millett (Oxford, 1990), p. 59.

[30] 'Your rosy face will grow lean, and turn as green as grass' (trans. in Wogan-Browne and Millett, *Medieval English Prose*, p. 32).

[31] 'do not dread it' (Add. MS. 4122, fo. 171, trans. Reames, *Middle English Legends*, p. 121).

[32] 'your place is prepared in heaven' (Add. MS. 4122, fo. 172, p. 121).

[33] 'wherever the body lies' (Add. MS. 4122, fo. 322, trans. Reames, *Middle English Legends*, p. 126).

a parturient woman in the middle ages, and both the angel's and Margaret's words would have been a source of comfort.

Margaret's own fear and, as seen in Lydgate's poem, her almost reflex-based prayer in the dragon's mouth as a 'relees of hir peyne', shows that, for all her saintly virtues, Margaret has human faults.[34] In her torture, she suffers Eve's punishment, the pains of labour, a curse which the Virgin Mary escapes. However, her virginity, courage and readiness to accept the will of God also evokes the Virgin. This makes her a valuable intercessory for medieval women who were burdened by Eve's punishment of labour pains and unable to attain the Virgin's painless childbirth. Margaret served as a comforting presence – a holy Christian woman who felt pain and understandably faltered momentarily.

In her final prayer, the saint, aware that her life would become a text, sets out precise instructions for her audience: 'Alle that to my passyoun wylle herken or reede / Or settes chirche or chapel, or geveth ony almysdede'.[35] Each instruction includes a request for remembrance by her cult. Just as the memory of her female community comforted Margaret throughout her torture, she asks the female audience to remember her in order to be comforted.

In the last two of verses of his prologue, Lydgate entreats Margaret to remember the woman who commissioned the writing of this poem: 'On hir that caused … / Thyn holy lyf me to compile and make'.[36] The woman, whom Lydgate calls 'My Lady Marche',[37] is Ann Mortimer, countess of March (d.1432), who married John Holland, first duke of Exeter (d.1447) in 1427. She commissioned Lydgate's poem in 1430, the year in which her first child was born. The commission may have been an effort to ensure a safe birth.

In the Cos. V.II.14 manuscript,[38] there are three marginal notes (Figure 9.1) in the same hand as the text, one of which (Figure 9.2) highlights the importance of memory to the owner: '*Peticio et pro eius memoriam agentibus et se invocantibus*'.[39] Initially, this appears to be an unusual choice by Lady Marche, as it eliminates the very aspect of veneration (advocacy for writing

---

[34] 'release of her pain' (Cos. V.II.14, fo. 293, trans. Reames, *Middle English Legends*, p. 155).

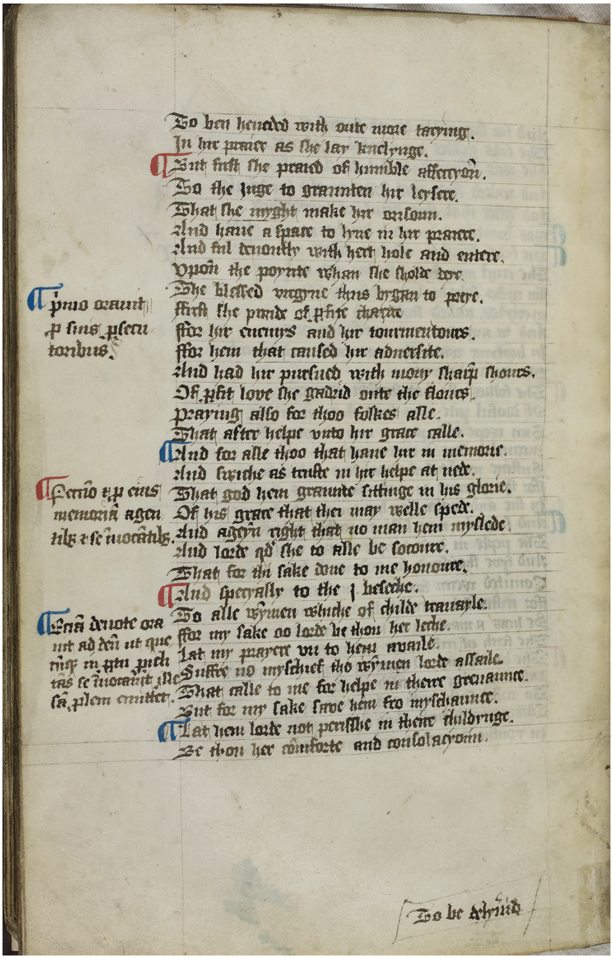
[35] 'All that listen to or read my passion / or establish a church or chapel, or give alms' (Add. MS. 4122, fos. 307–8, trans. Reames, *Middle English Legends*, p. 126).

[36] 'On her that caused … / your holy life to compile and make' (Cos. V.II.14, fos. 67–8, trans. Reames, *Middle English Legends*, p. 149).

[37] Cos. V.II.14, fo. 69, trans. Reames, *Middle English Legends*, p. 149.

[38] Fos. 104, 456–62.

[39] 'Those who would honour her memory and call on her' (trans. Reames, *Middle English Legends*, p. 168).



To ben heuedid with oute more tarying.
In her praier as she lay knelynge.
But first she praied of humble affeccyoun.
To the juge to graunten her leysere.
That she myght make her orisoun.
And haue a space to lyue in her preiere.
And ful deuoutly with hert hole and entere.
Vpon the poynte when she sholde dye.
The blessed virgyne thus began to preye.
First she praide of parfite charite
For her enemys and her tormentoures.
For hem that caused her aduersite.
And had her pursued with mony sharp shoures.
Of parfit love she gadrid oute the floures.
Praying also for thoo folkes alle.
That after helpe vnto her grace calle.
And for alle thoo that haue her in memorie.
And suche as truste in her helpe at nede.
That god hem graunte sittinge in his glorie.
Of his grace that thei may welle spede.
And ageyn right that no man hem myslede.
And lorde quod she to alle be socoure.
That for thi sake done to me honoure.
And specyally to the I beseche.
To alle wymen whiche of childe trauayle.
For my sake oo lorde be thou her leche.
Lat my prayere vn to hem avayle.
Suffre no myschief tho wymen lorde assaile.
That calle to me for helpe in thiere greuaunce.
But for my sake saue hem fro myschaunce.
Lat hem lorde not perisshe in thiere childrynge.
Be thou her comforte and consolacyoun.

Primo orauit
pro suis persecu
toribus.

Secundo pro eius
memoriam agen
tibus et se inuocantibus.

Tercia deuote ora
uit ad deum ut que
cumque in partu pericli
tans se inuocauerit illesa
prolem emitteret.

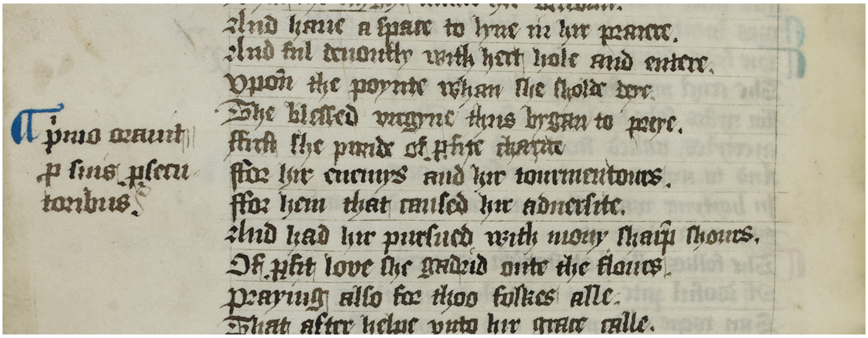
To be delyuerd

Figure 9.1. Margaret's final prayer with marginal additions in Lydgate's *The Lyfe of Seynte Margarete*, early fifteenth century, England (Durham University Library, MS. Cosin V.II.14, fos. 104v). Microfilm reproduced by kind permission of Durham University Library.

Margaret's life) which she is enacting. Yet she is directly aligning herself with Margaret as, in his prologue, Lydgate implores the saint to 'Remembre, O virgyne, upon that other side / … / My Lady Marche I mene…'[40] Margaret remembers Lady Marche through her patronage just as Lady Marche remembers Margaret through her sufferings. Such an interactive, private

---

[40] 'Remember, O virgin, that other side / … / I mean my Lady Marche' (Cos. V.II.14, fos. 66–9, trans. Reames, *Middle English Legends*, p. 149).



¶ pro orant
p suis psecu
toribus

And haue a space to lyue in her presence.
And ful deuoutly with hert hole and entere.
Vpon the poynte whan she sholde deye.
The blessed virgyne thus began to preye.
ffirst she prayde of hire charite
ffor hir enemys and hir tormentours.
ffor hem that caused hir aduersite.
And had hir pursued with mony sharp shours.
Of hert love she gadrid oute the flours.
Praying also for thoo folkes alle.
That after her lyue vnto hir grace calle.

Figure 9.2. Marginal addition blessing those who would honour Margaret's memory in Lydgate's *The Lyfe of Seynte Margarete*, early fifteenth century, England (Durham University Library, MS. Cosin V.II.14, fo. 104v).

and specifically female devotion is further demonstrated by Lydgate's envoy who urges 'Noble princesses and ladyes of estate / And gentilewomen lower of degré, / Lefte up your hertes, calle to your advocate'.[41] Margaret's passion is remembered by a female community and, through this, she remembers and intercedes on their behalf.

This notion of calling out in her memory is directly connected to comfort, 'to releve'.[42] Margaret prays 'Jhesu Cryste, if ony woman that schal delivered be / That Thou helpe than, if sche cale to me'.[43] The chronicler Matthew of Paris recorded in 1240 that Queen Eleanor, wife of Henry III, had named her newborn daughter Margaret (later Queen of Scots) because 'in the pains of childbirth the queen had invoked St. Margaret'.[44]

However, Margaret's name has a significance which extends beyond the invocation of the saint as a supportive birth attendant. The name is derived from 'margarita' meaning 'daisy' or 'pearl'. The *Trotula* records the use of powdered daisies in order to repair postpartum perineal tearing,[45] and pearls were used in aristocratic childbirths as a coagulant to prevent postpartum haemorrhaging.[46] Ground pearls were recommended by thirteenth-century physician Aldobrandino of Siena as a tonic ingredient to prevent trauma during birth.[47] Lydgate, who provides a detailed exposition of the meaning and origin of Margaret's name in the poem's prologue, refers to the pearl's healing qualities: 'This stone in vertu is a cordyal / To the spirit a grete confortatyf',[48] which is fitting, as it is through Margaret's own efforts that she manages to stem the flow of 'hir blode, hir veynes al torent'.[49] Therefore, when a woman called out Margaret's name in the travails of childbirth, she provided her own source of comfort.

---

[41] 'Noble princesses and ladies of estate / And gentlewoman of lower degree / lift up your hearts, call to your advocate' (Cos. V.II.14, fos. 519–21, trans. Reames, *Middle English Legends*, p. 162).

[42] 'to relieve' (Cos. V.II.14, fo. 532, trans. Reames, *Middle English Legends*, p. 162).

[43] 'Jesus Christ, if any woman is in labour / Help her if she calls to me' (Add. MS. 4122, fos. 311–2, trans. Reames, *Middle English Legends*, p. 126).

[44] J. T. Schulenburg, *Forgetful of Their Sex: Female Sanctity and Society* c.*500–1100* (Chicago, Ill., 1998), p. 230.

[45] The *Trolula* is an influential and widely transalted 12th-century compilation of three Salernian texts on women's health (F. Wallis, *Medieval Medicine: a Reader* (Toronto, 2010), p. 189).

Material veneration of Margaret in the lying-in room

Within the lying-in room, the manuscripts themselves were transformed into relics and objects of comfort. Through reading these texts or having them read aloud, the parturient women interacted with Margaret's story, both mentally and physically. Bennett defines reading as an interaction 'occurring between the culturally activated text and the culturally activated reader, an interaction structured by the material, social, ideological and institutional relationships in which both text and readers are inescapably inscribed'.[50] Margaret's lives demonstrate such an interaction through her audience's simultaneous use of the manuscripts textually and materially, transforming them into textual amulets.

Skemer defines textual amulets as writing worn on the body for protection which 'promised safe passage through ... common prayers, liturgical formulas, Christian legends and apocrypha … assembled materially and used physically to exploit and enhance the magical efficacy of words'.[51] Some French prayer rolls dedicated to Margaret survive, probably intended to be placed on the pregnant woman (Figure 9.3). More often books would be placed on a woman's abdomen or placed in a drawstring pouch, hung around her neck or her girdle.[52] This would have

---

[46] Reames, *Middle English Legends*, p. 163.

[47] *Le régime du corps de maître Aldebrandin de Sienne*, ed. L. Landouzy and R. Pépin (Paris, 1911), p. 71–2.

[48] 'This stone in power is a stimulant, / To the spirit something that restores and strengthens' (Cos. V.II.14, fos. 43–4, trans. Reames, *Middle English Legends*, p. 148).

[49] 'her blood, her veins all liquid' (Cos. V.II.14, fo. 230, trans. Reames, *Middle English Legends*, p. 153).

[50] T. Bennett, 'Texts, readers, reading formations', *Bull. Midwest Modern Language Association,* xvi (1982), 3–17, at p. 12.

[51] D. C. Skemer, *Binding Words: Textual Amulets in the Middle Ages* (University Park, Penn., 2006), p. 1.

[52] J. M. Musacchio, *The Art and Ritual of Childbirth in Renaissance Italy* (New Haven, Conn., 1999), p. 142.

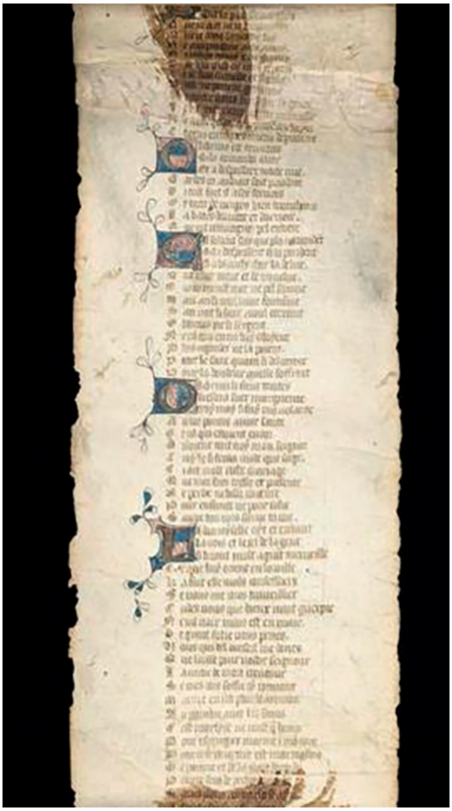


Figure 9.3. Birth scroll depicting the life of St. Margaret, *c.*1465, France (London, Wellcome Library, MS. 804). Reproduced with kind permission of The Wellcome Library.

effectively 'bound' the text to the woman's body, similar to the fastened prayer rolls.

Margaret's legend is known as a 'floating' life, appearing in household texts, miscellanies and common-place books more often than in systematic liturgical calendars.[53] Within each of the manuscripts under examination, Margaret's life appears to have been placed alongside two other saints associated with childbirth. In the large household text Ff.II.38, Mirk's Margaret sermon is positioned alongside two other sermons from *Festial*: Mary Magdelene (revered for her fertility miracles and her resurrection of a mother and child in the *Legenda Aurea*)[54] and St. Thomas of Canterbury (whose relics were thought to help women during unusual or difficult births).[55] This pattern continues in the small miscellany, Cos. V.II.14. Margaret's life, which appears alongside Mary Magdalene's again, as well as St. Alexius's, a saint with both a close relationship with his mother and a cult who specialized in caring for the sick.

---

[53] A. Edwards, 'Fifteenth-century English collections of female saints' lives', *Yearbook of English Studies*, xxxiii (2003), 131–41, at p. 136.

Add. MS. 4122 is quite unlike the other two manuscripts. A 'new kind of miscellany', it is very small (85 x 123 mm), and can easily be held in the palm of one hand.[56] It contains only three saints' lives: the *Life of Margaret*, 'a tretys of Oure Lady howe sche was wedded' and the *Life of St. Dorothy* (the patron saint of midwives). This manuscript appears to have been custom-made for a wealthier owner and, given the gender of its subjects, probably owned by a woman for lying-in use.

Skemer entitled his work on textual amulets *Binding Words*,[57] in reference to the tactile nature of the amulet and the binding power of words. However, to 'bounden' or to 'bynde' is a polysemous Middle English word. The language of binding and unbinding is pronounced in the lives of Margaret, specifically with regard to imprisonment and childbirth as the Middle English dictionary translates 'binden' as 'to fetter (a prisoner), put in chains' as well as to be 'bounden with barn, child, burdened (confined) with child, pregnant'. When Olibrius orders Margaret to be 'bounden with yren bondes'[58] in the *Stanzaic Life*, he is not simply sending her to prison, he is confining her to her lying-in space. Lydgate makes this even more explicit during the first appearance of the dragon in Margaret's cell: 'Where as she lay bounden in prisoun'.[59] He captures a particular moment for a parturient woman when, bound in her parturiency, she endures the worst of her labour pains.

In Margaret's life, imprisonment is inextricable from parturiency and the release of bonds signifies the end of parturient suffering. Margaret blesses herself in the Lydgate poem 'in relees of hir peyne'[60] from the jaws of the dragon. This sense of release is expressed powerfully in Margaret's prayer in the *Stanzaic Life*: ‘That Thou helpe than, if sche cale to me / And *unbynde her anoone* thorugh the vertue of that Tree’.[61] This phrase evokes the woman giving birth. Her umbilical cord, the binding connection with her child, was offered as an *ex-voto* to Margaret.[62] The phrase also suggests the folk custom where, in a room in which a woman was giving birth, it was customary for all knots to be unfastened. This sense of ‘unbinding’ would carry over to her delivery.[63]

---

[54] *The Golden Legend: Reading on the Saints*, ed. W. G. Ryan (Princeton, N.J., 2012), p. 379.

[55] H. Powell, 'The "miracle of childbirth": the portrayal of parturient women in medieval miracle narratives', *Social History of Medicine*, xv (2012), 795–811, at p. 811.

[56] Edwards, 'Fifteenth-century English collections', p. 131.

[57] Skemer, *Binding Words* (2006).

[58] 'bound with iron bonds' (Add. MS. 4122, fo. 160, trans. Reames, *Middle English Legends*, p. 121).

[59] 'where she lay bound in prison' (Cos. V.II.14, fo. 285, Reames, *Middle English Legends*, p. 155).

[60] 'in release of her pain' (Cos. V.II.14, fo. 293, Reames, *Middle English Legends*, p. 155).

Hornícková, in her study of Byzantine womb amulets (*hystera*), also suggests that there is an ‘evil side’ to the amulet, which was worn on the outside and caught all infectious demons, as well as a ‘protective side’ worn against the woman’s body.[64] There is a similar ‘evil’ side to the language of binding in the accounts of the life of Margaret. The demon appears with his hands bound to his feet (in the majority of Latin and Old English variants). The demon of Lydgate’s poem complains that ‘Thou hast me bounde with invisible bonde’,[65] making explicit Margaret’s role in not simply defeating him, but imprisoning him, as the pains of labour imprisoned her audience. This inversion of parturiency is evident in the *Stanzaic Life* when, after Margaret binds him with her wimple, the demon accuses Margaret of killing the dragon and imprisoning himself: ‘Thou brakest hym in peces, and bounden thou haste me’.[66] The demon describes his own actions on an unborn child (‘If it were unblessed, I brake it foote or arme’[67]) while the parturient woman lies helpless, bound in her pain. In her final prayer, Margaret counteracts this by asking for a mother ‘that her chylde be borne with alle the lymmes aryghte’.[68] Infant deformation was a persistent concern during the middle ages, as demonstrated through the practice of swaddling.

---

[61] ‘That You help then, if she calls to me / and *open her womb immediately* through virtue of that Tree’: my emphasis (Add. MS. 4122, fos. 312–13, trans. Reames, *Middle English Legends*, p. 126).

[62] L. Gilbertson, ‘The Vanni altarpiece and the relic cult of Saint Margaret: considering a female audience’, in *Decorations for the Holy Dead: Visual Embellishments on Tombs and Shrines of Saints*, ed. E. V. Lamia (Turnhout, 2002), pp. 179–90, p. 181.

[63] Reames, *Middle English Legends*, p. 126.

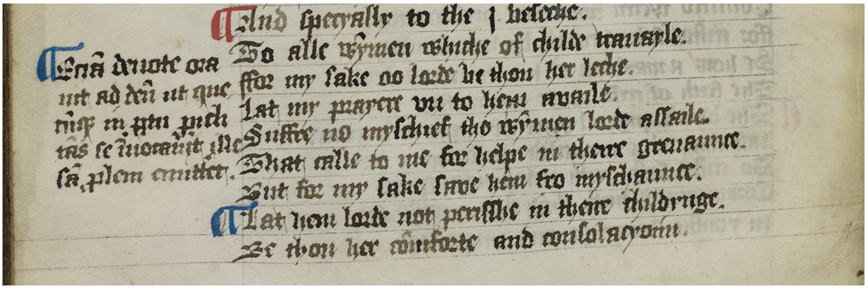
[64] K. Horníckova, ‘The power of the word and the power of the image: towards an anthropological interpretation of Byzantine magic amulets’, *Byzantinoslavica: Revue internationale des études byzantines*, lix (1998), 222–46, at p. 246.

[65] ‘You have bound me with an invisible bond’ (Cos. V.II.14, fo. 304, trans. Reames, *Middle English Legends*, p. 156).

[66] ‘You have broken him into pieces, and bound me’ (Add. MS. 4122, fo. 213, trans. Reames, *Middle English Legends*, p. 123).

[67] ‘If it was unbaptised, I would break its arm or foot’ (Add. MS. 4122, fo. 221, trans. Reames, *Middle English Legends*, p. 123).

[68] ‘that the child be born with all its limbs intact’ (Add. MS. 4122, fo. 317, trans. Reames, *Middle English Legends*, p. 126).



Etiā deuote ora
uit ad deū ut que
cūq in ptu parieli
tas se inuocauit illes
am plem emitteret.

And specyally to the I beseche.
To alle wymen whiche of childe travayle.
ffor my sake oo lorde be thou her leche.
Lat my prayere vn to hem availe.
Suffre no myschief tho wymen lorde assaile.
That calle to me for helpe in there grevaunce.
But for my sake save hem fro myschaunce.
Lat hem lorde not perisshe in there childynge.
Be thou her comforte and consolacyoun.

Figure 9.4. Marginal addition offering protection against the deformation of newborns, in Lydgate's *The Lyfe of Seynte Margarete*, early fifteenth century, England (Durham University Library, MS. Cosin V.II.14, fo. 104v). Reproduced by kind permission of Durham University Library.

Lydgate omits this prayer against deformation, as his text is only concerned with maternal safety. However, in the Cos. V.II.14 (fo. 104), there is a marginal note for lines 463–9 (Figure 9.4), larger than both previous marginal notes but still in the same hand: *'Etiam devote oravit ad Deum ut quecumque in partu parielitans se invocaverit illesam prolem emitteret'*.[69] Unlike previous marginal notes, this is an original addition, probably derived from a Latin variant that was available to the scribe. It suggests that the family owning the text was aware of the previous tradition regarding protection against deformation and was prepared to engage in the physical practice of marginal additions in order to 'activate' the manuscript to suit its form of devotion.[70] This consolidates Bennett's notion of the 'culturally activated' reader who amalgamated earlier traditions in Margaret's life with a contemporary text in order to construct an individual form of veneration and protection.[71]

Add. MS. 4122 was clearly owned by a relatively affluent female reader, due to its small size and content. The choice to lay the text out as prose and its unusually large margins, indicates that the owner wanted it to resemble a book of hours, even though only the first page is illuminated.[72] Skemer suggests that books of hours, as prized female possessions, had amuletic functions.[73] The physical characteristics of Add. MS. 4122 indicate its

---

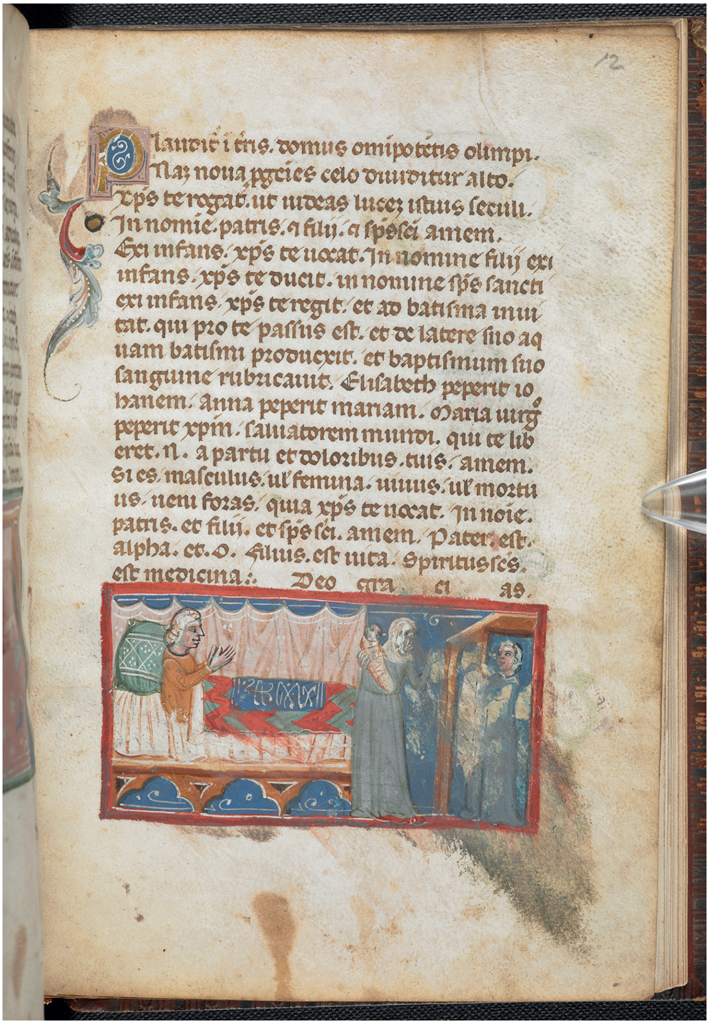
[69] 'She also prayed devoutly to God that any woman who called on her in childbirth should deliver an uninjured child' (trans. Reames, *Middle English Legends*, p. 168).

[70] K. M. Rudy, 'Kissing images, unfurling rolls, measuring wounds, sewing badges and carrying talismans: considering some Harley manuscripts through the physical rituals they reveal', *Electronic British Library Journal* (2011), 1–56, at p. 56.

[71] Bennett, 'Texts, readers, reading formations', p. 12.

[72] Edwards, 'Fifteenth-century English collections', p. 133.

[73] Skemer, *Binding Words*, p. 126.



12

Plaudit i tris. domus omipotetis olimpi.
Na; noua pgeies celo diuiditur alto.
Xps te rogat. ut uideas lucez iſtius ſeculi.
In nomie. patris. et filij. et ſpſci amem.
Exi infans. xps te uocat. In nomine filij exi
infans. xps te ducit. in nomine ſps ſancti
exi infans. xps te regit. et ad batiſma inui
tat. qui pro te paſſus eſt. et de latere ſuo aq
uam batiſmi produxit. et baptiſmum ſuo
ſanguine rubricauit. Eliſabeth peperit io
hanem. Anna peperit mariam. Maria uirgo
peperit xpm. ſaluatorem mundi. qui te lib
eret. N. a partu et doloribus. tuis. amem.
Si es maſculus. ul femina. uiuus. ul mortu
us. ueni foras. quia xps te uocat. In noie.
patris. et filij. et ſps ſci. amem. Pater. eſt.
alpha. et. o. Filius. eſt uita. Spiritus ſcs.
eſt medicina.: Deo gra ci as.

Figure 9.5. Secular birth scene in the *Passio* of St. Margaret, late fourteenth century, Italy (British Library, Egerton MS. 877, fo. 12). Reproduced by kind permission from the British Library.

possible use as a textual amulet. Its sober style and exclusion of curses (for example, omitted at ll. 98 and 243) that are found in other variants of the *Stanzaic Life* indicate that it was for private female use.[74] Its small size also renders it easy to put into a pouch or amuletic holder and bind it to a parturient body.

Most importantly, Add. MS. 4122 shows signs of repeated contact. Identifying patterns of wear in manuscripts is an important way of ascertaining not only a reader's rituals and habits, but also her emotional state.[75] This smudging, due to repeated osculation, or kissing, is also present on the final page of the late fourteenth-century Italian *Passio of St. Margaret* which depicts a secular birth scene (Figure 9.5).[76] Add. MS. 4122 shows less dramatic, but similar activity, more likely through repeated touching than kissing. This activity is concentrated on Margaret's face within the historiated initial of the first page. The saint's visage is obscured while the rest of her depiction and decoration are relatively intact. Furthermore, the text on folios 35v and 36, which contains Margaret's final prayer, has a number of black scuff marks on the left-hand corner. These are not present on any other page in the manuscript. This form of rubbing indicates an emotional state of the reader, as she creates her own ritual of veneration, choosing to focus both on the image of the dragon and Margaret's specific patronage of women in childbirth. In this way, books of Margaret's life are not just textual amulets, they are 'conceptualized as relics in and of themselves'.[77]

Cos. V.II.14 shows signs of repeated use in neither of those scenes, but on Margaret's victory speech over the demon in which she asserts her 'powere femnyne'. There are two large matching stains on these pages (fo. 102v and 103), indicating that something may have been pressed between them. The attention to Margaret's first day of torture is clear, as small letter x's litter the manuscript any time Margaret's blood is mentioned (229, 231, 235, 269), suggesting that Margaret's effusion of blood was significant to the reader. Cos. V.II.14, is not particularly large (*c*.295 x 185 mm), and is a completely different object to the Add. MS. 4122. It is not illuminated, is written in an unpolished *textura formata* and is probably a family compendium rather than an individual's book. There seems to have been an educational element to this collection of texts, further indicated by its crudely drawn marginalia

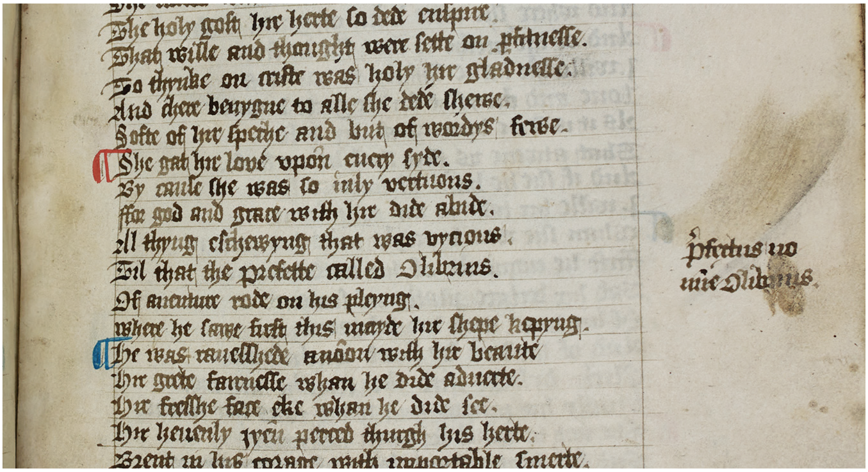
---

[74] Reames, *Middle English Legends*, p. 130.

[75] Rudy, 'Kissing images', p. 56.

[76] Rudy, 'Kissing images', p. 2.

[77] J. Borland, 'Violence on vellum: St. Margaret's transgressive body and its audience', in *Representing Medieval Genders and Sexualities in Europe: Construction, Transformation and Subversion, 600–1530*, ed. E. L'Estrange and A. More (Abingdon, 2002), pp. 67–89, at p. 83.



The holy gost hir herte so dide enspire.
That wille and thought were sette on pfitnesse.
To thynke on criste was holy hir gladnesse.
And there benygne to alle she dide shewe.
Softe of hir speche and but of wordys fewe.
She gat hir love vpon every syde.
By cause she was so inly vertuous.
ffor god and grace with hir dide abide.
All thyng eschewyng that was vycious.
Til that the prefette called Olibrius.
Of auenture rode on his pleyng.
Where he sawe first this mayde hir shepe kepyng.
He was rauesshede anoon with hir beaute
Hir grete fairnesse whan he dide aduerte.
Hir freshe face eke whan he dide see.
Hir hevenly eyen perced thurgh his herte.
Brent in his corage with importable smerte.

p̄fectus no
mīe Olibrius.

Figure 9.6. Marginal addition depicting Olibirius' name in Lydgate's *The Lyfe of Seynte Margarete*, early fifteenth century, England (Durham University Library, MS. Cosin V.II.14, fo. 99).

(such as several attempts to draw the five wounds of Christ on fo. 96v and what appears to be cursive handwriting practice on fo. 100). This is reinforced by helpful marginal additions, such as *'praefectus'* ('prefect') and '*nomine Olibrius*' ('named Olibrius') alongside Margaret's first meeting with Olibrius, probably to allow memorization (Figure 9.6). Marginal headings also simplify Margaret's prayer. Examples include '*primo oravit pro suis persecutoribus*' ('First she prayed for those who persecuted her') (Figure 9.7).[78] Examining a number of Harley manuscripts, Kathryn Rudy describes readers 'who treated their manuscript prayer books as objects of physical devotion' as they 'often both added and subtracted material'.[79]

While each of the manuscripts shows evidence of the 'culturally activated reader', these forms of veneration are not uniform. Add. MS. 4122 shows a reader's affinity with the triumph over the dragon, while Cos. V.II.14 suggests a reader who handled Margaret's final prayer extensively. These examples demonstrate how Margaret's parturient audience had diverse approaches to material veneration.

Conclusion

It is difficult to identify the female voice in the crowded conversation around childbirth in the late middle ages. Often, it is simply absent, because

---

[78] Trans. Reames, *Middle English Legends*, p. 168.

[79] Rudy, 'Kissing images', p. 4.

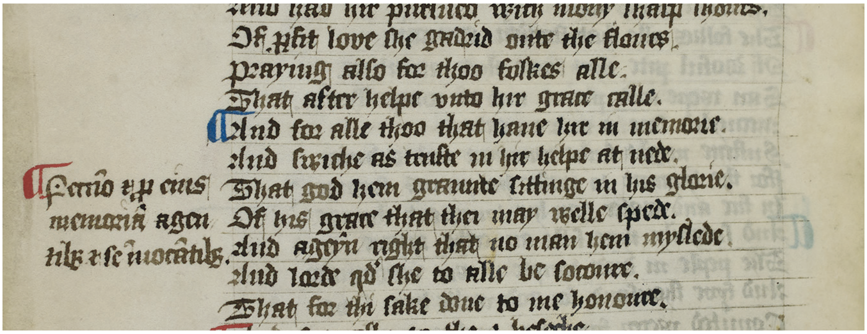


Figure 9.7. Marginal addition depicting Margaret's prayer for her persecutors in Lydgate's *The Lyfe of Seynte Margarete*, early fifteenth century, England (Durham University Library, MS. Cosin V.II.14, fo. 104v).

those having the conversation were men, either physicians or clergy, whose understanding of parturiency was confined mostly to the theoretical. The textual visibility of the late medieval English lying-in room will continue to be an issue for scholars. However, through the *Lives* of Margaret of Antioch, we are provided with an alternative insight into the lying-in room which extended beyond medical and theological texts that were written for men by men. Within this lying-in space, male-authored hagiographies were transformed by the female reader in order to provide comfort and support at a time when it was most desperately needed. These *Lives*, as sacred objects that were part of the lived experience of medieval women, provide a glimpse of the lying-in room. As an intercessor for the occupants of this vital female space, Margaret became a textual voice of the lying-in room, but also a source of private support. Her *Lives* served as both childbirth representation and relic, simultaneously providing both visibility and comfort.

10. Gendered spaces and female filth: Auda Fabri's mystical heresy

Kathryn Loveridge

This chapter focuses on the implications of Christ's transgressive, gendered flesh to female lay belief in early fourteenth-century southern France, and argues that gender-identified spaces, so significant to theology of medieval female mystics, also influenced that of women far removed from the communities of cloister, anchorhold or beguinage. Auda Fabri, a woman from the Pyrenean village of Merviel, accused of heresy during the 1318–25 Inquisition, is taken as an example. Auda confessed that, having heard of a local woman who had given birth in the village street, she had associated Christ's eucharistic body with what was recorded as the '*turpitudo*' (filth) expelled by women during childbirth, and that she had consequently ceased to believe in Christ's real presence.[1] Previous scholarship has presented Auda in a variety of ways: as a masochistic hysteric, a victim of post-partum sickness, an example of late medieval female over-scrupulosity and an example of Marian devotion.[2] This chapter suggests, however, that her notions of female flesh and Christ's body, profoundly shaped by the female-identified, enclosed spaces within which she existed, identify Auda with female mystics from the thirteenth century onwards.

Auda's deposition is contained in the inquisitional register of Jacques Fournier (d. 1342), a vigorous ecclesiastical reformer, who, as bishop of Pamiers, was commissioned by Pope John XXII (d. 1334) to stamp out the

---

[1] Auda would have answered in Occitan. During the interrogation, the notary would record in the vernacular what was said by the witnesses and then translate the document into Latin (one of the 'filters' that C. Bruschi argues must be taken into account when reading them trial records) (C. Bruschi, *The Wandering Heretics of Languedoc* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 11–49).

[2] E. Le Roy Ladurie, *Montaillou: Cathars and Catholics in a French Village, 1294–1324*, trans. B. Bray (1978), pp. 299–300, 303–4, 307–8 and 322–4; M. Rubin, *Corpus Christi: the Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 342–3; W. Love Anderson, 'The real presence of Mary: eucharistic disbelief and the limits of orthodoxy in fourteenth-century France', *Church History*, lxxv (2006), 748–67; D. Elliott, *Proving Woman: Female Spirituality and Inquisitional Culture in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton, N.J.2004), pp. 223–9.

K. Loveridge, 'Gendered spaces and female filth: Auda Fabri's mystical heresy', in *Gender in medieval places, spaces and thresholds*, ed. V. Blud, D. Heath and E. Klafter (2018), pp. 157–70.

remains of Cathar heresy in his diocese by conducting a lengthy programme of inquisitional trials.[3] The register, located in the Vatican library, and known as Vat. Lat. MS. 4030, originally comprised three volumes: two recording the depositions – one of which survives – and one containing the sentences pronounced on those tried.[4] This has also been lost, but the material can be found, in condensed form, in Phillipe van Limbourch's *Historia Inquisitionis*, a seventeenth-century discourse concerning heresy and the Inquisition; and in volumes 27 and 28 of *Collection Doat*, a collection of 258 volumes of material copied from various inquisitional registers from southern France.[5]

Fournier's inquisition commenced in March 1318. Auda's trial took place between 15 July 1318 and 2 August of that year, with the sentence delivered 9 August. The deposition itself is relatively brief, occupying just six of MS. 4030's 325 folios.[6] Auda was accused of heresy and speaking to others against the Catholic faith.[7] She denied any heresy, but confessed to a prior inability to believe in Christ's real presence. This, she claimed, had occurred about six years previously after receiving communion for the first time.[8] Prior to receiving communion, Auda asserted that she had failed to confess 'a certain serious sin'.[9] According to the deposition, Auda was immediately deeply troubled by her sin, but it was three years later that she came to believe that, although '*ille Deus omnipotens esset in celis … tamen non credebat quod ille Deus esset in sacramento altaris, nec quod per verba sancta que dicit capellanus, esset ibi corpus Christi*'.[10] This error persisted until her appearance before the bishop when the Virgin Mary miraculously intervened.[11] Auda's confessed disbelief is resonant of Cathar teaching concerning transubstantiation.[12]

---

[3] In this chapter, all references to Auda's deposition are to *Le Registre d'inquisition de Jacques Fournier, évêque de Pamiers (1318–25)*, ed. J. Duvernoy (3 vols., Toulouse, 1965), ii. 33a–138d, pp. 82–105. The translations are mine.

[4] Vatican library, MS. 4030. See, J.-M. Vidal, *Le Tribune d'Inquisition de Pamiers. Notice sur le Registre de l'èvêque Jacques Fournier* (Toulouse, 1906), pp. 15–16.

[5] See Bruschi, *Heretics*, pp. 24–6; P. van Limbourch, *Historia Inquisitionis cui subjungitur Liber sententiarum Inquisitionis tholosanae ab anno christi MCCCVII ad annum MCCCXXIII* (Amsterdam, 1692); Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, *Collection Doat*, vols. 27–8.

[6] *Collection Doat*, vols. 27–8.

[7] Duvernoy, *Le Registre d'inquisition*, ii. 82, 133a.

[8] Duvernoy, *Le Registre d'inquisition*, ii. 82, 133b.

[9] Duvernoy, *Le Registre d'inquisition*, ii. 83, 133b.

[10] Duvernoy, *Le Registre d'inquisition*, ii. 83, 133b; 'The all-powerful God was in Heaven … she did not, however, believe that God was present on the sacramental altar, nor that the body of Christ was present through the holy words spoken by the priest' (Duvernoy, *Le Registre d'inquisition*, ii. 83, 133b; p.84, 133c).

[11] Duvernoy, *Le Registre d'inquisition*, ii. 83, 133b.

[12] Despite the Church's efforts to eradicate Catharism – the Albigensian Crusade (1209–29) prosecuted in the Languedoc being a particularly bloody and effective example

However, Auda fervently denied any heretical influence or association with heretics: the thoughts, she declared, were her own as a result of her failure to confess, and she hid her error from everyone, even the priest, until, having become seriously ill, she told her husband, Guillelmus, and a friend of the family, Emengardis Garuda. They were horrified at her admission and encouraged her to confess to a priest immediately and return to her former belief, threatening her with all kinds of punishments inflicted on heretics.[13]

Auda's testimony was confirmed by the said Guillelmus and Emengardis.[14] However, in a subsequent interrogation she altered the cause of her error, revealing that it had stemmed from her association of Christ's body with female reproductive flesh:

> *Contigit enim, sibi, ut dixit, quod cum quadam die iret ad ecclesiam Sancte Crucis ad missam audiendam, audivit a quibusdam mulieribus, de quarum nominibus dixit se non recordari, quod nocte precedenti quaedam mulier quondam filiam [pepererat] in via intus castrum de Muro Veteri, ita quod non poterat pervenisse ad hospicium, quo audito cogitavit turpitudinem quam emittunt mulieres pariendo, et cum videret elevari in altari corpus Domini, habuit cogitationem ex illa turpitudine quod esset infectum corpus Domini et quod et[ex] hoc incidit in dictum errorrem crediente videlicet quod non esset ibi corpus Domini Iesu Christi*.[15]

Auda also admitted that she had told several women of her error: having witnessed a certain Aladaycis de Pregolh, who had nursed Auda's son, receive communion in the house of a neighbour, Auda displayed intense distress and confessed her inability to believe in God to the shocked female company.[16] Her testimony states:

– it still remained, and hard-to-reach villages in the Pyrenees proved relatively safe refuges for its adherents. On Catharism, see, e.g., R. I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Authority and Deviance in Western Europe 950–1250* (Oxford, 1987); M. Barber, *The Cathars: Dualist Heretics in the Languedoc in the High Middle Ages* (Harlow, 2000); J. H. Arnold, *Inquisition and Power: Catharism and the Confessing Subject in Medieval Languedoc* (Philadelphia, Penn., 2001); and *Heresy and Inquisition in France, 1200–1300*, ed. J. H. Arnold and P. Biller (Manchester, 2016).

[13] Duvernoy, *Le Registre d'inquisition*, ii. p. 83, 133b.

[14] Duvernoy, *Le Registre d'inquisition*, ii. pp. 85–6, 134a; pp. 86–8, 134a–b.

[15] 'It happened to her, so she said, that on a certain day when she was going to the church of the Holy Cross to hear mass, she heard from some women whose names she said she did not remember, that the previous night a woman had given birth to a girl in the street inside the town of Merviel, because she had been unable to reach her home. And when Auda heard this, she thought about the filth that women expel in childbirth; and when she saw the body of the Lord lifted up on the altar, she had the thought on account of that filth that the body of the Lord was infected; and from this she fell into the said error, believing that it wasn't the body of the Lord Jesus there [on the altar]' (Duvernoy, *Le Registre d'inquisition*, ii. 94, 136a).

[16] Duvernoy, *Le Registre d'inquisition*, ii. 94, 136a–b.

> *dicta Auda incepit turbari et moveri, dicens ad interrogationem dictarum duarum mulierum que eandem interrogabant quare sic turbabatur et movebatur, que dixit quod pro eo quia non poterat credere Deum, que mulieres dixerunt ei: 'Sancta Maria, quid dicitis, revertamini ad Deum et habeatis spem in eo!'*[17]

Helpless, Auda begged her maid, Guillelma de Athone, to ask the Virgin Mary to intervene. Guillelma obeyed; '*Et cum orasset, statim dicta auda fuit, ut dixit, illuminata, et credidit firmiter in Deum, et credit adhuc prout dixit*.'[18] Auda's testimony was substantiated, albeit reluctantly, by the four women who had witnessed her distress.[19] Satisfied with Auda's reformation and penitence, Fournier sentenced her to regular confession and a rigorous programme of confession, fasts and pilgrimages, which she was to perform for the next three years.[20]

Although Auda was shocked to identify Christ's body with female flesh, she was certainly not unique in this association. As early as Augustine, Christ had been identified as mother and bridegroom of the Church; and by the later middle ages, literature and iconography abounded with such imagery.[21] Christ's salvific and nurturing flesh and blood became inextricably linked with the beneficent qualities of the female body and female uncontained blood: as the mother of the Church, Christ suffered for, bore and nurtured her with the blood/milk which gushed from the vagina- or nipple-like wound in his side.[22] However, medieval notions of women's flesh and blood were generally negative. Aristotle's teaching of the inherent inferiority of the female body, which was particularly influential among medieval scholars and theologians, fitted in with Church doctrine that the female expulsion of menstrual and birthing blood signified women's inherent sinfulness as daughters of Eve.[23] Nonetheless, many women mystics manipulated these ideas in their revelations of Christ's nature. Hildegard of Bingen (d. 1179), for example, exploits such imagery in *Scivias*, when she describes her vision of the crucified Christ whose crimson blood flows from his side as a bridal gift for Ecclesia, giving birth to the salvation of souls.[24] Mechthild of Hackeborn (d. 1298) transforms the blood flowing from Christ's open side into a fragrant, golden liquid which the faithful suck through golden straws.[25] Julian of Norwich (d. *c*.1416) continues this appropriation of salvific female flesh with her description of a crucified and haemorrhaging, menstruating, even birthing Christ who appears to her in her sick-room, when she writes:

---

[17] 'The said Auda began to be in turmoil and disturbed, saying in reply to the two women who were asking her why she was thus in turmoil and disturbed, that it was because she was unable to believe in God. And the women replied, "Blessed Mary! What are you saying? Turn back to God and have faith in him!"' (Duvernoy, *Le Registre d'inquisition*, ii. 95, 136b).

[18] 'And when she had prayed, at once the said Auda was, so she said, enlightened, and believed firmly in God, and did still believe, so she said' (Duvernoy, *Le Registre d'inquisition*, ii. 95, 136b). Donohoe discusses the risks of childbirth in her chapter '"Unbynde her anoone": the lives of St. Margaret of Antioch and the lying-in space in late medieval England', this volume.

[19] The women involved were: Aladaycis de Pregolh; Aladaycis, widow of Arnaldus Gamicius; Ramunda, widow of Petrus Gamicius; and Guillelma de Athone, the maid in the Fabri household. When questioned by Fournier, Aladaycis, widow of Arnaldus Gamicius, Ramunda, and Guillelma initially denied Auda's admission, out of fear of being punished for not informing on a heretic, and/or out of loyalty towards Auda. Fournier summoned Auda to give evidence in the presence of these witnesses, and all three reluctantly capitulated. They were convicted of perjury, although no record of their sentence survives (Duvernoy, *Le Registre d'inquisition*, ii. 98, 137a; 99, 137b; 105, 138d).

[20] Duvernoy, *Le Registre d'inquisition*, ii. 95, 136b; 103, 138b.

[21] Augustine, *De civitate dei contra paganos*, XXII, 17 <http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/augustine/civ22.html> [accessed 24 Oct. 2017].

[22] E.g., see C. Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley, Calif., 1984); C. Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption:*

> So plenteously the hote blode ran oute that there was neither sene skynne ne wound, but as it were al blode […] Notwitstondyng the bleding continued a while til it migt be sene with advisement, and this was so plenteous to my sigt that methowte if it had be so in kind and in substance for that tyme, it should have made the bed al on blode and a passid over aboute.[26]

Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion (New York, 1991); C. Walker Bynum, *Wonderful Blood: Theology and Practice in Late Medieval Northern Germany and Beyond* (Philadelphia, Penn., 2006); L. Herbert McAvoy, *Authority and the Female Body in the Writings of Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe* (Cambridge, 2004); B. Bildhauer, *Medieval Blood* (Cardiff, 2006).

[23] Thomas Aquinas, for example, defines woman as a '*mas occasionatus*', a faulty male (Summa Theologica Supplementary questions 52.1, ad. 2). Thomas of Cantimpré was deeply suspicious of menstrual blood. E.g., see Thomas of Cantimpré, *Liber de natura rerum, Book 14, De lapidibus pretiosis et eorum virtutibus: Thomae Cantimpratensis, Liber de natura rerum, Teil I Text*, ed. H. Boese (Berlin and New York, 1973), p. 74; cited in W. F. MacLehose, 'Nurturing danger: high medieval medicine and the problem(s) of the child', in *Medieval Mothering*, ed. J. Carmi Parsons and B. Wheeler (New York, 2013), p. 74.

[24] Hildegard of Bingen, *Hildegard of Bingen: Scivias,* 2.6.1, trans. Mother Columba Hart and J. Bishop (New York, 1990), p. 238.

[25] *Revelationes Gertrudianae ac Mechtildianae*, ed. D. Ludwig Paquelin (2 vols., Paris, 1875–7), ii. 96.

[26] *The Shewings of Julian of Norwich*, ll. 473–80 <http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/the-shewings-of-julian-of-norwich-part-1> [accessed, 3 Oct. 2015]. L. Herbert McAvoy discusses the notion of Julian's menstruating Christ in 'Monstrous masculinities in Julian of Norwich's *A Revelation of Love* and *The Book of Margery Kempe*', in *The Monstrous Middle Ages* (Toronto, 2003), p. 5.

Given this context of mystic affectivity, we might also read Auda's experience in the same light. In terms of Julia Kristeva's notion of abjection, Auda exceeded acceptable levels of affectivity; she identified her own abject, birthing and menstruating maternal flesh with the abject corpse of Christ.[27] The horror with which she regarded her own female flesh became inseparable from that of Christ, and she therefore had to reject both. While Hildegard, Mechthild, Julian and other mystic visionaries could work within Catholic doctrine and dogma, Auda could not. She was both socially and geographically removed from the female mysticism of Italy and northern Europe, and was not part of the communities of discourse in which visionaries such as Mechthild flourished.[28] Auda, therefore, was forced to choose between two options: denying Christ's presence in the elements and despising her own carnality (in other words embracing Cathar doctrine) or rejecting her 'vision' as erroneous, and submitting to Catholic orthodoxy.

Central to Auda's affective response to Christ's gendered flesh and her subsequent rejection of her vision were the gender-identified spaces in which she experienced and developed her response. The significance of such spaces is discussed in detail by McAvoy, who explored the multivalent properties of the physical and metaphorical spaces assigned to women in the middle ages.[29] She argued that, despite some fluidity between the two, male- and female-identified spaces were sharply delineated, with men occupying the public spaces and women the private, often domestic ones.[30] These spaces, however, are not confined to the physical, McAvoy argued, but can be 'abstraction[s] … culturally constructed ideologue[s] which combine both location and social relations, which then proceed to reinforce one another'.[31] Examples of this multivalence, McAvoy noted, are the bedroom and anchoritic cell of Julian of Norwich, which, she argued, become 'central to [the visionary's] articulation of her own transition from lack of knowledge and youthful naïvety to the mature expression of a seasoned wisdom which characterizes her later writing'.[32] The multivalency of these spaces affects Julian's writing and, as a result, Julian's anchoritic cell, a space of 'apparent privation' and 'stricture', paradoxically allows her the freedom to develop her writing and theology.[33] Auda's notions of Christ's body were also profoundly shaped by the enclosed spaces within which she existed: after all, it was in the bedroom and the prison cell in which she was incarcerated during her trial that her theology developed. For Auda, however, the gender-identification of these spaces was inherently unstable, since the male-identified space of church and court room continually encroached.

---

[27] J. Kristeva, *Pouvoirs de l'horreur: Essai sur L'abjection* (Paris, 1980), p. 86.

[28] Nowhere in Auda's testimony is there evidence of familiarity with female mystic thought and expression. It is also unlikely that Auda would have encountered it, due to the distance of her village from Italy and northern Europe and the social circles within which she moved. Although relatively well off – her husband could employ a maid and a nurse – Auda's social sphere seems to have been limited to family, servants and peasants, all of whom show an ignorance of anything more than basic orthodox theology. Any divergence from strict orthodoxy could more likely be attributed to Auda's personal logic and/or to an awareness of Cathar theology. Auda's crisis emerges from her inability to reconcile orthodox teaching regarding Christ's body and her revulsion of female flesh, which displays a certain similarity to Cathar perceptions of female reproductive flesh. Although Auda expressly denies any association with Catharism, it would have been difficult for her to be completely ignorant of its teaching, due to its presence in the neighbouring villages and towns. When Auda eventually attempts to articulate her fears to friends, family and even her servants, the advice she is given is to believe more, but this fails to comfort her or renew her faith. For a general account of the beliefs of the inhabitants of Merviel and the surrounding villages and towns, see Ladurie, *Montaillou*, pp. 288–326.

[29] McAvoy, *Authority*.

[30] McAvoy, *Authority*, pp. 3–4; *Medieval Practices of Space*, ed. B. Hannawalt and M. Kobialka (Minneapolis, Minn. and London, 2000), p. x; cited in McAvoy, *Authority*, p. 3.

A window into Auda's beliefs is conveyed by her conversations-cum-confessions with her husband and female confidantes at home. Auda's house and, in particular, her chamber were domestic spaces in which she was either alone or (with the exception of Guillelmus Fabri, her husband) with select female company.[34] Confined to her sick bed following her 'vision', Auda received a number of female visitors: the family friend, Emengardis Garauda; Aladaycis de Pregolh, widow of Arnaldus Gamicius; Ramunda, widow of Petrus Gamicius; and Guillelma de Athone. (Auda left her home only to visit a woman whose sick son was receiving communion in the house.)[35] To these women Auda admitted her inability to believe and begged for help (Auda was understandably reluctant to confess to a priest, fearing no doubt the repercussions of confiding in ecclesiastical authority). The chamber, therefore, acted as a confessional in which she disclosed (albeit selectively) her heresy; and those to whom she confessed performed the role of the priest, advising, admonishing and reassuring Auda.

According to the deposition, Emengardis, summoned by the sick Auda, found her *in camera* – in her chamber.[36] The '*camera*' could be a vault, vaulted space, small room or bedroom, or small house.[37] The use of '*camera*', therefore, suggests that Auda was doubly enclosed: within the female-identified space of her chamber, located in the other such identified space of the house. '*Osta, tia*', Auda is recorded as having demanded, '*quomodo potest esse non possum credere Dominum, nec eciam possum credere quod hostia que elevator in altari per capellanum sit corpus Christi?*'[38] Emengardis provided Auda with a couple of prayers and told her the story of the Mass of St. Gregory, according to which the Host takes on the appearance of real flesh in order to convert an unbelieving woman of Christ's presence in the Host.[39] The story was very popular during the middle ages and several versions of it existed. Auda's version, however, was unusual in that not only did the bread appear as flesh (the finger of a child), but the wine in the chalice appeared as coagulated blood:

---

[31] McAvoy, *Authority*, p. 5; referring to D. Spain, *Gendered Spaces* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1992), p. 2.

[32] McAvoy, *Authority*, p. 6.

[33] McAvoy, *Authority*, p. 6.

[34] Duvernoy, *Le Registre d'inquisition*, ii. 83, 133c.

[35] Duvernoy, *Le Registre d'inquisition*, ii. 83, 133b; 94, 136a–b; 95, 136b.

[36] Duvernoy, *Le Registre d'inquisition*, ii. 83–4, 133c.

> *dictus cappellanus posuit se ad oracionem ut Deus ostenderet miraculum super hoc, cum populo qui erat in ecclesia. Qua oracione facta, cum vellet dare de dicto pane consecrato dicte mulieri, panis quem sibi offerebat consecratus ad communicandum apparuit ut digitus alicuius pueri, et vinum consecratum in calice apparuit ut sanguis coagulatus.*[40]

Exempla in which the Host appears as Christ's blood and the disembodied Christ-child abound in later medieval literature and iconography, in order to encourage affective devotion in the observer, convert the unbeliever, uncover desecration of the Host, or confirm the devotion of a believer.[41] However, the inclusion of Christ's blood in the chalice does not seem to be part of the Gregory mass narrative. This suggests that the blood itself held particular significance for Auda. In her version the blood was coagulated, identifying it with the specifically female blood of birthing and menstruation. These aspects of female flesh horrified Auda, but she only admitted to this later at her trial: at this point, she attributed her loss of faith to having received communion following a less than thorough confession. The inclusion of the blood in the chalice stood in, as it were, for the real reason Auda was profoundly distressed: her horror of maternal, abject female flesh and, by association, Christ's own body – a horror she could not yet admit to her confidantes or to Fournier. The private, female-identified space of her chamber, and the role of Emengardis as *quasi* confessor, therefore, permitted the exchange between the two women to take place and allows Auda's response to her 'vision' to develop.

---

[37] J. F. Niermeyer and C. van de Kieft, *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon Minus*, rev. J. W. J. Burgers (Leiden and Boston, 2002), pp. 157–8.

[38] 'Oh, *tia*, how is it that I cannot believe in the Lord, nor even am able to believe that the Host which the priest raises on the altar is the body of Christ?' (Duvernoy, *Le Registre d'inquisition*, ii. 83–4, 133c).

[39] Duvernoy, *Le Registre d'inquisition*, ii. 84, 133c.

[40] 'And straight away the said priest prayed to God to perform a miracle over the bread, in the presence of the people who were in the church. And when he had finished praying, when he wished to give the said consecrated bread to the said woman, the consecrated bread which he was offering her in communion appeared as the finger' (Duvernoy, *Le Registre d'inquisition*, ii. 84, 133c).

[41] E.g., see Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, pp. 108–29.

A similar exchange occurred between Auda and her husband, but here Guillelmus's role as confessor is more pronounced. Guillelmus claimed that Auda would only confide in him, '*in confessione*', when she was sure that they were alone and in her chamber.[42] Auda then confessed not only a lack of belief in God and Christ's eucharistic presence, but an aversion to Christ's body. '*Sancta Maria, domine*', she said, '*qualiter potest hoc esse? Nam quando sum in ecclesia et elevator corpus Christi, non possum orare ipsum nec possum ipsum respicere, set quando puto respicere ipsum, supervenit quoddam anbegament ante occulos*'.[43] Guillelmus/Auda's choice of the word, '*anbegament*', to describe what prevents her from looking at the Host is interesting. The word seems to have been unfamiliar to the notary or copyist, who left it untranslated, but Peter Dronke suggested that it could correspond to the Provençal, *esbayment* or *esbleugimen*, equivalent to the French éblouissement, meaning 'dazzling', 'glare' or 'hindrance'.[44] Auda herself admitted throughout her interrogation that she could not look at or pray to the Host.[45] Auda's '*anbegament*' is similar to that experienced by female mystics such as Mechthild of Hackeborn for whom the bleeding Christic body is often accompanied by a dazzling light.[46] Such an interpretation however, was unavailable to Auda. The *anbegement* prevented her from participating in communion, a reflection of her heresy with its association with the abject and the filth of female flesh rather than a means of divine revelation.

The gender-identification of Auda's chamber becomes especially significant when Auda seemed to reach the climax of her suffering and was cured through the miraculous intervention of the Virgin Mary.[47] The performance of the women can be compared to that of the inmates of female communities such as the nuns of Helfta who bypassed traditional male authority to access the divine directly.[48] The women in Auda's chamber pleaded for Auda and the perfect and whole woman, God's intact mother, restored Auda's faith and rescued her son's flesh from female abjection. Guillelma the maid's account is particularly dramatic. Having returned home from witnessing Aladaycis receive communion, Auda became very distressed. Guillelma found her mistress raving and fallen on the ground.[49] Auda is recorded as pleading, '*Osta, quid faciam? Nam amisi sensum et sum anrava et non possum rogare Deum nec Beatam Virginem Mariam!*'[50] Auda begged the women to act on her behalf: '*dicens dicta Auda ipsi Aladayci et dicte Guillelme pedissece quod flectis genibus ponerent se in orationem et rogarent Beatam Virginem Mariam quod iuvaret dictam Audam, quod et fecerunt dicte Aladaycis et Guillelma*.[51] The Virgin Mary interceded immediately, it seems, for Auda was instantly restored to health.

---

[42] Duvernoy, *Le Registre d'inquisition*, ii. 83–4, 133c.

[43] 'Blessed Mary, sir, how is this possible? For whenever I am in church and the body of Christ is elevated, I cannot pray to it, nor can I look upon it, but when I think to look upon it, some sort of hindrance/dazzling appears before my eyes' (Duvernoy, *Le Registre d'inquisition*, ii. 85, 133d).

[44] P. Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages: a Critical Study of Texts from Perpetua to Marguerite Porete* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 273–4.

[45] Duvernoy, *Le Registre d'inquisition*, ii. 94, 136a; 95, 136b.

[46] E.g., see Mechthild of Hackeborn, *Liber Specialis Graciae*, ii. 14, in *Revelationes Gertrudianae ac Mechtildianae* (2 vols., Paris, 1875–7), ii. 1–421, at p. 148.

Similar gender-identification can be applied to Auda's prison cell trial. Unlike Julian of Norwich and other anchorites, Auda was neither alone nor solely in the company of other women during her incarceration. Fournier had a prison built specifically to contain those arrested during his inquisition; the cells were occupied by several inmates at a time, and contained both men and women.[52] Nevertheless, the enclosed nature of the cell in which the inmate was shut and from which she emerged fundamentally resembles the cell of the anchorite. McAvoy refered to Julian's cell as both a tomb, in which she was ritually walled up as one already dead to the world, and a womb from which she would emerge as one reborn after death.[53] Julian developed the metaphor of the cell as womb through her use of childbirth and blood imagery. Christ bleeds from an unseen wound and bloodily labours on the cross to give birth to human redemption.[54] Julian thus reinterprets medieval ambivalence to female reproductive flesh and redeems this flesh through the body of Christ. Auda, too, experienced a sort of rebirth from the anchorhold, as it were, of her prison cell. It is here, for example, that she decided to confess her eucharistic vision. As far as we can tell from the trial record, Auda told no one but Fournier of her vision. Such a choice of confidant may seem strange: not only was Fournier a man to whom she confessed something uniquely feminine, but he could send her to prison or to her death. However, as Dyan Elliott observed, following the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, there existed an increasing correlation between the role of confessor and penitent, and that of inquisitor and defendant.[55] Just as in confession to her priest, Auda was expected to search her memory meticulously and confess fully to Fournier, who would then set her the penance which would absolve her of her sins. Auda did this scrupulously, altering her testimony six times. Sometimes the emendations seem relatively trivial, but on occasion they critically changed the course of the trial, as when she altered her account of the birth in the street, for example. Crucially, between each appearance Auda was returned to her cell, where she examined the accuracy of her testimony. Her relationship with Fournier therefore mirrors that of visionaries and their confessors to whom, following a period of contemplation and communion with God in their cell or anchorhold, they confessed even the most trivial things.[56] Auda's cell became such a space: it was the anchoritic 'womb/tomb' in which she worked out her vision of Christ's contaminated and contaminating flesh, in an attempt to expedite her salvation and from which, with the help of her confessor, she was reborn, ready to confess and obtain absolution.

---

[47] Duvernoy, *Le Registre d'inquisition*, ii. 100, 137d.

[48] E.g., see Bynum, *Jesus as Mother*, pp. 170–262.

[49] 'Madam, what is the matter? Why are you harming yourself?' (Duvernoy, *Le Registre d'inquisition*, ii. 100, 137d).

[50] 'Oh, what shall I do? For I have lost my mind and I rave and I cannot pray to God or the Blessed Virgin Mary' (Duvernoy, *Le Registre d'inquisition*, ii. 100, 137d).

[51] 'Then the said Auda told Aladaycis and Guillelma the servant to go down on their knees and pray to the Blessed Virgin Mary to help the said Auda, which the said Aladaycis and Guillelma did' (Duvernoy, *Le Registre d'inquisition*, ii. 100, 137d).

[52] I should like to thank D. I. Nieto-Isabel from the University of Barcelona for her valuable information concerning Fournier's prison in Pamiers.

[53] McAvoy, *Authority*, p. 71.

[54] McAvoy, *Authority*, pp. 80–1.

However, the gender-identification of Auda's chamber and cell is not unproblematic. Far from enabling Auda to emerge from the tomb/womb of these enclosed spaces as a recognized interpreter of the divine, Auda was continually misunderstood by her husband and the women in her company, battled to vocalize her thoughts and fears, and was effectively silenced and brought into line by Fournier. As a result, Auda never allowed the maternal body to transcend the abjection culturally assigned to it, and the feminine potential of Christ's body was dismissed. Auda's incapacity to move beyond the abject can be explained by her exclusion from what Anneke B. Mulde-Bakker has termed 'communities of discourse', spiritual 'network[s] of like-minded people which allowed the sharing and validation of experiences, such as those enjoyed by the women of Helfta, Hildegard of Bingen, and Julian of Norwich'.[57] When Auda did share her revelation in her home, she met with horror and incomprehension. Guillelmus claimed he was terrified at Auda's confession.[58] He thought his wife mad to say such things and threatened to expel her from the house.[59] Emengardis is recorded as calling Auda a traitoress who would burn as a heretic.[60] Auda was visibly distressed during her encounter with Emengardis: she struck her face and wept.[61] However, Emengardis's advice was to confess and believe, hence the two prayers that she tells Auda to say in the morning and at the elevation of the Host and the *exemplum* of the Gregory mass.[62] Auda's friends and maid were also at a loss. Visiting Auda after Aladaycis de Pregolh had received communion, they found Auda on her couch, '*se molestantem et ravatantem et dicentem: Sancta Maria, succurre michi*'.[63] Their advice was well meaning but ineffectual: '*confideret in Deum, quia non erat aliquid qui tantum confortaret eam sicut Deus, nec in quo tantum deberet credere sicut Deum et Sanctam Mariam*'.[64]

---

[55] Elliott, *Proving*, pp. 223–9.

[56] E.g., Marie d'Oignies confessed to Jacques de Vitry sins she had committed as a child (J. N. Brown, *Three Women of Liege: a Critical Edition of and Commentary on the Middle English Lives of Elizabeth of Spalbeek, Christina Mirabilis, and Marie d'Oignies* (Turnhout, 2008), pp. 282–4).

Auda's prison cell was also a problematic space, as it was here that Auda decided to relinquish her vision and acknowledge that her salvation ultimately depended on confession to a priest in the male-identified space of the court room. As discussed earlier in this chapter, after her appearance at court, Auda returned to the cell, where she waited to be summoned again. Auda appeared before Fournier ten times, an unusually large number of inquisitions, especially given the relatively brief length of the trial itself. The womb-like space of the cell, therefore, suffered continual intrusion from the male-identified space of the court room and Auda's cell became a space where the male and female voice contended for supremacy. This tension emerges in the numerous dialogues between Auda and Fournier throughout the course of the trial.

---

[57] A. B. Mulder-Bakker, trans. R. Olsen, 'Holy laywomen and their biographers in the thirteenth century', in *Living Saints of the Thirteenth Century: the Lives of Yvette, Anchoress of Huy; Juliana of Cornillon, Author of the Corpus Christi Feast; and Margaret the Lame, Anchoress of Magdeburg*, ed. A. B. Mulder-Bakker, trans. J. A. McNamara *et al.* (Turnhout, 2011), pp. 11–12 and p. 23.

[58] Duvernoy, *Le Registre d'inquisition*, ii. 86, 134a.

[59] Duvernoy, *Le Registre d'inquisition*, ii. 86, 134a.

[60] Duvernoy, *Le Registre d'inquisition*, ii. 87, 134b.

[61] Duvernoy, *Le Registre d'inquisition*, ii. 88, 134b.

[62] Duvernoy, *Le Registre d'inquisition*, ii. 86, 134a.

[63] 'Harming herself and raving and saying: Sancta Maria, help me!' (Duvernoy, *Le Registre d'inquisition*, ii. 98, 137a).

[64] 'She should trust in God, because there was nothing that could comfort her as much as God, and that she should not hesitate at all to believe in God and Holy Mary' (Duvernoy, *Le Registre d'inquisition*, ii. 98, 137a).

The theme of abjection runs through Auda's deposition both in Auda's words and in the testimonies of the other witnesses. Auda 'raved', self-mutilated, 'uttered dreadful things only a mad person would say' and believed that the devil would drag her to hell. She considered female flesh as filth-producing and that Christ's flesh was consequently polluted by it. Moreover, after each sojourn in her cell, Auda re-emerged to recriminate herself further, even inculpating those who tried to protect her.[65] Unlike the confessors who listened to, recorded and affirmed the revelations of their mystic charges, Fournier completely ignored Auda's explanations for her distress. He never questioned her on her association between female flesh and Christ's body, nor on the miraculous intervention of the Virgin Mary; but instead pursued Auda's possible connections with Cathar heretics. By encouraging Auda to examine the truth of her confession in her cell, therefore, Fournier attempted to direct her thinking, and so stifle her voice in the court room. This battle is similar to the one presented in Kristeva's essay 'Stabat Mater', in which her personal experiences of childbirth and maternity are lyrically set alongside, and interrupt her drier, academic essay on the cult of the Virgin Mary: while Auda grappled with the complexity and paradox of Christ's body, Fournier sought to reduce Auda's crisis to a matter of orthodoxy and heterodoxy.[66] However, Fournier's position of authority meant that only with his approval could Auda's expression be sanctioned, yet Fournier made it impossible for Auda to resolve her sense of abjection through mystic expression. This may explain Auda's assertion that she had been rescued through the intervention of the Virgin Mary: as Wendy Love Anderson argued, Auda 'tailored' her defence 'to suit her inquisitorial audience', and the cult of the Virgin was prominent in the later middle ages.[67]

Auda appeared for sentencing on Monday 7 August, suitably contrite and humble.[68] The charge was read out and Auda's disavowal of her previous beliefs was noted, as was her profound penitence. In the summing up of the trial there was no mention of Auda's association of the Host with female *turpitudo*, or the miraculous intervention of the Virgin Mary.[69] Auda was spared imprisonment or the public disgrace of wearing the yellow cross of heretics, and sentenced to regular confession and a rigorous three-year programme of fasts and pilgrimages.[70] Fournier, it seems, did not consider Auda to be a heretic. However, several elements of the trial's conclusion indicate that he did consider her crisis to have been more complicated than the deposition suggests. On Thursday 3 August, Fournier had summoned an impressive twenty-seven men representing ecclesiastical and secular authority, to discuss how to proceed with Auda's sentencing.[71] Irene Bueno argued that Fournier considered so large a council to be necessary due to 'the unclear nature of Auda's heresy'.[72] For, as she observed, although 'Auda's experience does not easily match Fournier's interpretive classifications, [her] denial of the eucharistic miracle no doubt called to mind the preaching of the heretics and their criticism of the sacrament of the altar'.[73] The penance of fasting, confession and pilgrimage to neighbouring churches dedicated to the Virgin who saved her, might suggest that Fournier recognized in Auda an unexpected devotion and depth of thought that needed to be addressed, though not encouraged.

---

[65] Duvernoy, *Le Registre d'inquisition*, ii. 98, 137a; 99, 137b.

[66] J. Kristeva, 'Stabat Mater', trans. L. S. Roudiez, in *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. T. Moi (Oxford, 1986), pp. 160–86.

[67] Anderson, 'Real presence', pp. 750 and 758.

[68] Duvernoy, *Le Registre d'inquisition*, ii. 102, 138a

[69] Duvernoy, *Le Registre d'inquisition*, ii. 103, 138b.

In conclusion, while the female-identified space of the home and prison-cell are intrinsic to Auda's identity as a mystic, her potential as a visionary was suffocated by her exclusion from the communities of discourse enjoyed by her more privileged visionary sisters. Auda's potential was further threatened by the continual encroachment of the male-identified spaces of church and court room into the spaces which should nurture her spiritual development. Nevertheless, Auda's wrestling with profound theological doctrine makes an important intervention in the growing question of spirituality/mysticism among 'ordinary' lay men and women in late medieval Europe – a topic of study which has historically privileged the privileged.

---

[70] Duvernoy, *Le Registre d'inquisition*, ii. 103–4, 138 b–c.

[71] Duvernoy, *Le Registre d'inquisition*, ii. 101–2, 137d–138a.

[72] I. Bueno, *Defining Heresy: Inquisition, Theology and Papal Policy in the Time of Jacques Fournier*, trans. I. Bolognese, T. Brophy and S. Rolfe Prodan (Leiden, 2015), p. 141.

[73] Bueno, *Defining Heresy*, p. 141.

11. Shopping or scrimping?
The contested space of the household in Middle English devotional literature

Louise Campion

One of the defining characteristics of the figure of Christ in the gospels is, this chapter argues, his homelessness. In the gospels of both Luke and Matthew, Christ declares his commitment to living outside domestic walls, reminding his followers that, 'the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests, but the son of man hath not where to lay his head'.[1] These biblical verses underscore the importance of Christ's identity as a nomadic preacher by suggesting that those who wish to be devoted to him ought to abandon their own home, too, exchanging their families for a new spiritual kinship network. Having remarked upon his own lack of dwelling place, Christ tells a man who asks for leave to remain at home to bury his father to 'follow me';[2] this simple instruction draws the potential believer into the mobile lifestyle of the unsheltered Christ. In the Bible, the distance between the believer and the domestic sphere is one of the hallmarks of Christian devotion. The household is left behind, with the focus shifted to the much vaster landscape that Christ and his followers must navigate as they fulfil their spiritual mission. This biblical marginalization of domestic space is considerably less apparent, however, in numerous late Middle English devotional texts. These works, in a significant departure from the conventions of the Gospel, craft a version of Christ who is notably keen to go home. In response to this divine desire for homely enclosure, the writers of these texts present their readers with allegories and metaphors that draw heavily upon the language of household space. The proper preparation and configuration of these imagined domestic spheres, into which Christ might be welcomed, is framed as a crucial component of their readers' devotional practice.

---

[1] Luke IX: 58; Matthew VIII: 20.

[2] Luke IX: 59. This is just one example of multiple instances in which Christ asks those who listen to his preaching to 'follow' him. For further examples, see Matthew IV: 19, Matthew XVI: 24, Mark I: 17, Mark X: 21 and Luke XVIII: 22.

L. Campion, 'Shopping or scrimping? The contested space of the household in Middle English devotional literature', in *Gender in medieval places, spaces and thresholds*, ed. V. Blud, D. Heath and E. Klafter (2018), pp. 171–84.

The discussion in this chapter will have two primary strands. First, two allegories of household space taken from two fifteenth-century Middle English texts will be examined. Second, the ways in which different sets of readers might have responded to these domestic images will be considered. The first devotional-domestic allegory appears in the first book of *The Doctrine of the Hert*, a Middle English translation of a thirteenth-century Latin religious treatise, directed towards an audience of enclosed nuns.[3] The second allegory is taken from Bridget of Sweden's *Liber Celestis*, a vast collection of over 700 of the saint's visionary writings.[4] These allegories are fascinating to compare, in part, because they are so very different. In the *Doctrine*, the author allegorizes the heart of the enclosed religious woman as a household that awaits the arrival of Christ, a knight, who is battle-weary in the wake of his tireless fight against sin. The proper preparation of this imagined domestic sphere is achieved through the careful cleaning of the household and the subsequent sparse furnishing of the space. Even if Christ, the noblest visitor of all, is coming to stay, one should still ensure that the house is modestly arrayed. Bridget, however, formulates both the figure of Christ and the proper configuration of domestic space in altogether different terms. In the *Liber*, Christ is not a noble visitor, but a prospective spiritual spouse for Bridget. The home that must be prepared is, therefore, the nuptial household, which must be readied for the celestial couple's union. In a notable departure from the domestic economy of the *Doctrine*, Christ instructs Bridget to fill no fewer than three houses with copious material goods, the success of their spiritual marriage determined by abundance, rather than modesty.

The entirely divergent character of these household allegories shows the versatility of domestic imagery in medieval devotional texts, with each author suffusing it with wholly different sets of imaginative resonances. Some of these divergences, it is worth noting, probably stem from the fact that the *Doctrine* and the *Liber* are drawn from two different genres. As the *Doctrine* is a guidance text for a convent community, it is unsurprising to find that many of its metaphors and allegories serve a didactic purpose, with a focus on the importance of modesty and the careful regulation of the body. The *Liber*, by contrast, is a visionary work, its content determined by God's authorization of Bridget as a channel for his divine word. What yokes these texts together, though, is their shared readers – a point which will be elaborated upon later. They were read both within conventual walls and beyond the spaces of religious enclosure, as they were also encountered by women lay readers in their own homes. In drawing out the thematic and symbolic divergences in these texts' household allegories, this chapter draws attention to the multifaceted web of domestic resonances that their mutual readers are confronted with. Both texts cultivate a domestic space that Christ is keen to enter, but the reasons for his desire to come home are markedly contested.

---

[3] The Middle English *Doctrine* is extant in four manuscripts: Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, MS. McClean 132; Cambridge, Trinity College Library, MS. B.14.15; Durham, University Library, MS. Cosin V.III.24 and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Laud Misc 330. For the most comprehensive discussions of both the Latin and vernacular versions of the *Doctrine*, see *A Companion to the Doctrine of the Hert: the Middle English Translation and its Latin and European Contexts*, ed. D. Renevey and C. Whitehead (Exeter, 2010).

[4] The full text of Bridget's Middle English *Liber* survives in two manuscripts: British Library, Cotton MSS. Claudius B. I. and MS. Julius F. II. On the popularity of the Middle English *Liber* in 15th-century England, see R. Ellis, '"Flores ad Fabricandam … Coronam": an investigation into the uses of the revelations of St. Bridget of Sweden in fifteenth-century England', *Medium Aevum*, li (1982), 163–86.

Before any detailed comparison of the domestic allegories of the *Doctrine* and the *Liber*, it is necessary to sketch an outline of the character of English fifteenth-century domesticity, which will shape an understanding of the cultural context in which these household allegories are encountered. It is, of course, very difficult to give a universally applicable definition of late medieval English domesticity. As remains the case today, the character of the home in which one dwells is dependent on such factors as wealth, social status and its location, whether urban or rural. With regard to the contingent of the texts' shared readership who encountered the *Doctrine* and *Liber* at home, the focus here will be a set of women readers that might be broadly described as bourgeois, or middle-class. Therefore, the characterization of domesticity in this chapter will be specifically applicable to this social context. In recent years, there have been several useful examinations of medieval domestic space.[5] These studies draw a whole range of conclusions about the character of medieval domesticity, but one of the most relevant to the argument here concerns its emotional pull. A useful summary of the intimate connection between the medieval home and its inhabitants was given by Maryanne Kowaleski and Jeremy Goldberg, who remarked that: 'In the context of the English later middle ages … the sense of familiarity, of intimacy, of emotional warmth and security that *home* and *homli* conveyed to contemporaries is perhaps a useful starting point for understanding 'medieval' domesticity'.[6] A similar perspective was given by Jennifer Deane, who suggested that, 'Of all the ideas [that shape] medieval imaginations, none was more potent than that of the home and its associations with heart and hearth, bread and bedchamber, warmth and welcome'.[7] From these critical formulations of the medieval domestic sphere as a space defined by intimacy and comfortable familiarity, one might deduce that the household had a considerable hold over the late medieval imagination. This emotional connection between the household and its dwellers meant that the furnishing and adornment of the home was a particularly important task.

---

[5] E.g., see *Medieval Domesticity: Home, Housing and Household in Medieval England*, ed. M. Kowaleski and P. J. P. Goldberg (Cambridge, 2008); *The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe*, ed. J. M. Bennett and R. M. Karras (Oxford, 2013), pp. 179–278.

[6] 'Introduction. Medieval domesticity: home, housing and household', in Kowaleski and Goldberg, *Medieval Domesticity*, pp. 1–13, at p. 4.

One snapshot of householders' emotional and financial investment in their domestic space is the late medieval fashion for purchasing cushions. This commercial trend, which was particularly prevalent among the emergent bourgeois urban classes, was explored by Goldberg, who noted that, 'cushions would appear to be a predominantly urban phenomenon from at least the third decade of the fourteenth century until the second half of the fifteenth century'.[8] As this taste for cushions is especially notable among urban dwellers, one might reasonably conclude that these newly popular soft furnishings were a key commodity in the emerging mercantile economy. The involvement of urban women in these commercial exchanges, and by extension, it might tentatively be suggested, the purchase of cushions, is worth noting. According to Goldberg, bourgeois women were far more involved in the commercial activities that sustained the 'market economy' than their country-dwelling counterparts, who were excluded 'from such essential agrarian activities as ploughing, mowing, and carting', practices that underpinned rural economies.[9] Goldberg went on to note that this greater involvement in the town economy afforded bourgeois women 'a more significant voice than their rural sisters in deciding priorities within the household budget'.[10] Women had a particularly significant influence upon the configuration of the more 'intimate' rooms in the house, such as the bedchambers;[11] these rooms are, moreover, spaces in which cushions are likely to be placed. It is in this context, therefore, of the household as a space to which one feels a burgeoning emotional connection, and for which one has a financial responsibility to adorn as one sees fit, that fifteenth-century women readers encounter the domestic allegories of the *Doctrine* and the *Liber*.

---

[7] J. Deane, 'Pious domesticities', in Bennett and Karras, *The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe*, pp. 262–78, at p. 262.

[8] P. J. P. Goldberg, 'The fashioning of bourgeois domesticity in later medieval England: a material culture perspective', in Kowaleski and Goldberg, *Medieval Domesticity*, pp. 124–44, at p. 127.

[9] Goldberg, 'Bourgeois domesticity', p. 137. On the relationship between women and work in the context of medieval England, see P. J. P. Goldberg, *Women, Work, and Life Cycle in a Medieval Economy: Women in York and Yorkshire* c.*1300–1520* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 82–157. (For further discussion of the subject of women's roles and influence in the late medieval household and community, see C. Kennan, 'On the threshold? The role of women in Lincolnshire's late medieval parish guilds', this volume).

[10] Goldberg, 'Bourgeois domesticity', p. 137.

[11] Goldberg, 'Bourgeois domesticity', pp. 137–8. On bourgeois women's role in the configuration of their households, see S. R. Jones, 'Women's influence on the design of

At this point it is worth reiterating that the *Doctrine* and the *Liber* are very likely to have had mutual women readers. The primary evidence for the texts' shared audience is drawn from the will of Margaret Purdans, apparently written in 1481, who left both the *Doctrine* and what is described as an 'English book of St. Bridget' to Bruisyard, a Franciscan nunnery in Suffolk.[12] Purdans, a bourgeois widow, lived in Norwich, Norfolk, and was a member of a social milieu that Mary Erler termed a 'devout society', made up of 'the men and women who were part of Norwich's governing class; with the city's hermits, anchorites, and priests; with several Cambridge doctors and masters of divinity, representatives of a learned, clerical culture'.[13] Erler characterized Purdans, here, as a woman with a web of connections to the various facets of Norwich society, both secular and religious. Purdans's quotidian life, though, was spent within the walls of the secular household; this is further evidenced by her will, in which she bequeaths an item of her domestic furnishing, a cupboard.[14] The relative comfort of Purdans's life at home, discernible in part from the fact that she had such items as books and cupboards to specify in her will, stands in stark contrast to that of the Franciscan sisters who became the readers of her bequeathed volumes. To briefly introduce a point to which this chapter returns later: with their order rooted in the values of poverty and mendicancy, the nuns at Bruisyard encountered the domestic allegories of the *Liber* and the *Doctrine* in an altogether different cultural and spatial context.[15] The passing of the texts between these dissimilar spaces would, therefore precipitate a range of responses to the two allegories' divergent resonances. The domestic sphere, which as I have previously suggested is an emotionally significant space, would therefore present the shared readers of both texts with something

---

urban homes', in *Gendering the Master Narrative: Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, ed. M. C. Erler and M. Kowaleski (Ithaca, N.Y., 2003), pp. 190–211.

[12] L. Herbert McAvoy, *Authority and the Female Body in the Writings of Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 229. For further detail about the books that were owned by Bruisyard, see D. N. Bell, *What Nuns Read: Books and Libraries in Medieval English Nunneries* (Kalamazoo, Mich., 1995), pp. 121–2.

[13] M. C. Erler, *Women, Reading, and Piety in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 68.

[14] Erler, *Women, Reading, and Piety*, p. 71.

[15] On the Franciscan order, see J. Moorman, *A History of the Franciscan Order from its Origins to the Year 1517* (Oxford, 1968).

of an interpretive challenge, as it is simultaneously yoked to both frugality and copiousness.

Now that some of the broader context in which the *Doctrine* and the *Liber* were read has been outlined, the content of their domestic allegories can be examined in more detail. It is hoped that analysing the significant differences between their symbolic resonances will underscore the suggestion that the versatility and flexibility of the imagined space of the household could pose its readers with the challenge of navigating its multifarious meanings. This analysis begins with the *Doctrine* and its allegory of household scarcity. The text is split into seven books, each of which is devoted to a different spiritual gift that will prepare the reader's heart for union with God. Book One of the *Doctrine*, which is the longest of the seven, details the way in which the 'mynche' might make use of the gift of dread in the readying of her heart for spiritual union. Over the course of this first book, the *Doctrine* author routinely makes use of the language and imagery of domesticity.[16] Alongside the homely image that is the subject of discussion here, the author of the treatise also draws his reader into the kitchen, with the heart allegorized as meat to be roasted for Christ's consumption.[17] Later in the first chapter, the preparation of the heart is likened to that of a bride who must dress herself for her impending marriage; while this image might not be as explicitly yoked to household space as the other examples discussed in this chapter, it is inflected with what might be described as a domestic mode of intimacy.

As briefly outlined in the introduction to this chapter, the domestic allegory that is the primary focus here sees the heart of the enclosed religious woman reimagined as a household that awaits the arrival of the tired and injured soldier-Christ. Those who do not gladly prepare the domestic sphere for its celestial visitor are, the *Doctrine* author suggests,

> unkynde wrecchis … that wil not gladly receyve suche a champion into oure house of oure hertis, the whiche for oure love wagyd batayle with oure enemy and had the victorie and the maystry, comyng fro the batayle al forsprenclid with blood, blew, wery, and woundid.[18]

---

[16] For discussions of domestic imagery in the *Doctrine*, see C. Whitehead, *Castles of the Mind: a Study of Medieval Architectural Allegory* (Cardiff, 2003), pp. 123–8; D. Renevey, 'Household chores in *The Doctrine of the Hert*: affective spirituality and subjectivity', in *The Medieval Household in Christian Europe,* c.*850*–c.*1550: Managing Power, Wealth, and the Body*, ed. C. Beattie, A. Maslakovic and S. R. Jones (Turnhout, 2003), pp. 167–85.

[17] For a detailed analysis of this kitchen allegory, see V. Gillespie, 'Meat, metaphor and mysticism: cooking the books in *The Doctrine of the Hert*', in Renevey and Whitehead, *A Companion to The Doctrine of the Hert*, pp. 131–58.

[18] 'unkind and ungenerous, who will not happily welcome such a champion into the house of our hearts. For love of us, he waged battle against the enemy, and won the victory

Great emphasis is placed, in this rebuke, upon the importance of cultivating one's spiritual hospitality. To refuse the visiting Christ a place to rest when one is aware of his state of abjection would amount to a refusal to acknowledge the profound sacrifice that he has made. Before the reader can welcome her guest, however, she must prepare the house of her heart to receive him. The transformation of the household of the heart into a space fit to welcome the noblest visitor of all is not, as one might perhaps expect, achieved through its elaborate adornment; no cushions are arrayed in the holy parlour. Rather, the *Doctrine*'s author focuses upon the careful cleaning and tidying of the home, and its subsequent modest furnishing. This cleaning is an allegorization of the practice of confession, with the well-regulated spiritual body likened to an attentively tidied household: 'Cnowleche of the synnes be þe mouthe in confessioun is noþing ellis but puttyng ought filthes of the hous of oure herte be the dore of the mowth with þe brome of the tunge'.[19] This compartmentalizing of the reader's body into a set of recognizably domestic tools is indicative of a focus upon the importance of self-regulation. Just as one ought to ensure that a household is clean and tidy prior to the arrival of a very important guest, so must one take responsibility for practising confession.[20] The author of the *Doctrine*'s encouragement of the self-managed cleansing of the soul is likely to be a product of the 1215 decision of the Fourth Lateran Council to make yearly confession mandatory for every Christian.[21] In yoking confession to the

---

and majesty. He comes from the battle, sprinkled with blood, ashen, weary, and wounded' (*The Doctrine of the Hert*, ed. C. Whitehead, D. Renevey and A. Mouron (Exeter, 2010), p. 6 (ll. 51–5)). All translations from Middle English are mine, unless otherwise stated. Citations are given first by page number, and then, if applicable, by line numbers.

[19] 'The understanding of sin, via the mouth during confession, is nothing else but the expulsion of the filth of the house of our heart, by the door of the mouth, with the broom of the tongue' (Whitehead, Renevey and Mouron, *Doctrine*, p. 7, ll. 78–80).

[20] This allegorization of confession as an act of domestic labour has echoes of a similar allegory in the early 13th-century Middle English guide for anchoresses, *Ancrene Wisse*: 'Schrift schal beon ihal … Þe poure widewe hwen ha wule hire hus cleansin, ha gedereð al þe greaste on an heap alre earst, and schuueð hit ut þenne. Þrefter kimeð eft aȝein and heapeð eft to gederes þat wes ear ileauet and schuued hit ut efter' (*Ancrene Wisse, edited from MS Corpus Christi College Cambridge 402*, ed. J. R. R. Tolkien (Early English Text Soc., original ser., ccxlix, Oxford, 1962), p. 161). 'Confession must be whole … When the poor widow wants to clean her house, she first gathers all the dust in a heap, and then sweeps it out. Then she comes back and heaps what has been left together again, and sweeps it out after' (*Anchoritic Spirituality: Ancrene Wisse and Associated Works*, trans. A. Savage and N. Watson (New York, 1991), pp. 163–4).

[21] On the penitential manuals that encouraged this introspective management of the soul, see L. E. Boyle, 'The Fourth Lateran Council and manuals of popular theology', in *The Popular Theology of Medieval England*, ed. T. J. Heffernan (Knoxville, Tenn., 1985), pp. 30–43.

quotidian tasks of the well-kept household, the *Doctrine*'s author renders this most salient of devotional practices as routine as sweeping, thereby positing it as a steadfast component of his readers' lives.

Once the household has been expunged of its sinful dirt, it must then be modestly furnished in order to accommodate the visiting Christ. The *Doctrine* advises a notably sparse adornment of the domestic sphere, suggesting that it should contain just four crucial items:

> thow must ordeyne for hym gostly thees foure thinges: a bed, a met-table, a stole, and a candilstik with light. By þis bedde þou schalt undirstond pees and rest of conscience, by þis mete table penaunce, by þis stole þe dome of þin owen conscience, and by þis candelstik with light þe knowleche of þi conscience.[22]

This allegory of selective spiritual furnishing is influenced by the Old Testament tale of the elderly widow who was instructed by Elijah the prophet to prepare her home to welcome him as her guest.[23] The emulation of the hospitality of this biblical precedent is achieved through the modest adornment of the domestic sphere, with each piece of furniture carefully selected to have an explicit resonance of penitential preparation. It might be suggested, therefore, that the sparseness of this imagined household encourages a specific and emphatic focus upon the preparation for confession; there are no extraneous cushions or consumer goods to distract the repentant reader from welcoming Christ into her newly cleansed heart.

As previously noted, the *Doctrine*'s rendering of the home as a space that needs to be meticulously cleaned before being modestly refilled with the specific furniture of penance is a world away from Bridget's allegory of copious acquisition in the *Liber*. Before looking at this allegory in detail, it is worth pointing out that Bridget's text is full of images that might be read as rooted in the practical experience of domestic life. This is unsurprising when one considers the fact that, prior to her multiple pilgrimages across Europe and the Holy Land and the foundation of her globally successful Bridgettine Order, Bridget had lived as an aristocratic wife and mother of eight children.[24] She had, therefore, extensive experience of managing a large household and estate. To give just one example of Bridget's recourse to the vocabulary of domesticity, found in book three of the *Liber*, the saint receives a vision of St. Agnes, who informs her that God is a washerwoman.[25] Just as the household labour of washing cloth rinses its stains and renders it white once again, so God washes the soul of sin, restoring it to its unsullied state.[26]

---

[22] 'You must devoutly prepare these four things for his arrival: a bed, a dining table, a seat and a candlestick with light. By this bed you should understand peace and tranquillity of your conscience; by the dining table, penance, by the seat the judgment of your own conscience; and by the candlestick with light the understanding of your conscience' (Whitehead, Renevey and Mouron, *Doctrine*, pp. 9, ll. 151–6).

[23] Whitehead, *Castles of the Mind*, p. 124; 1 Kings XVII: 13.

[24] For a biography of Bridget, see B. Morris, *St. Birgitta of Sweden* (Woodbridge, 1999).

By far the longest and most sustained invocation of domestic language in the *Liber* is that of the preparation of three houses, which will be occupied by Bridget and Christ, her spiritual spouse.[27] As this is a lengthy and detailed allegory, a brief summary of its contents is given, before some of its key details are pulled out to discuss in greater depth. In the vision, which appears in Book Two of the text, Christ appears before Bridget and asks her to stock three houses with the necessary goods to sustain them throughout their nuptial union. The first house must contain sufficient goods of bodily sustenance, namely, bread, water and salt. This nourishing bread is not, Christ specifies, the eucharistic bread of the altar, but the bread of 'good will', the consumption of which aids the expulsion of sin, leaving the body morally cleansed. This bread will be seasoned with the salt of divine wisdom. The second house must be filled with different kinds of cloth. The first of these, linen, symbolizes the peaceful good will that the devout soul ought to manifest towards a neighbour, or, indeed, God. Bridget must also acquire cloth made from the skins of dead animals, which symbolizes merciful actions that emulate the deeds of the saints. Finally, the house must contain expensive silk, made by worms, which is emblematic of abstinence from sin. The third and final house needs to be filled with a range of agricultural tools, livestock, and two separate containers, in which should be stored different kinds of liquid. The first container should hold thinner liquids, which are water, oil and wine, while the second is reserved for thick, viscous substances, including mustard and meal. These thick liquids symbolize evil thoughts, while the runnier liquids symbolize the opposite, and are resonant of good and pure thoughts. Among the tools should be a plough, which represents good reason, while an axe should also be kept; this symbolizes the introspective examination of the devout soul's intentions. Bridget's stocks of animals ought to include horses, and these beasts will carry the soul towards God during the act of confession. Once the houses have been filled, Bridget must ensure that her hoarded goods are carefully protected. Her estate must, therefore, be fitted with a door of hope, which hangs upon two hinges, one of which symbolizes the avoidance of collapsing into despair, while the other is a rebuke of presumptuous behaviour. The door is then fully secured with a lock of perfect charity.

---

[25] *The Liber Celestis of St. Bridget of Sweden*, ed. R. Ellis (Early English Text Soc., old ser., ccxci, Oxford, 1987), p. 244, ll. 9–15.

[26] On this domestic image, see Whitehead, *Castles of the Mind*, p. 132.

[27] For a discussion of Bridget's lengthiest domestic allegory, see Whitehead, *Castles of the Mind*, pp. 132–6; and Morris, *St. Birgitta*, pp. 20–1. Both of these accounts comment upon the extent to which Bridget draws upon her own experience of the aristocratic household in her crafting of this set of visions.

Bridget's allegory of plentiful stocking and material acquisition sees a broad spectrum of devotional commonplaces, from the importance of good works to the practice of confession, mapped onto a landscape that resembles a vast homestead. The allegory might be read, therefore, as an interweaving of Bridget's secular and spiritual experience. This melding of the household and the holy is particularly in evidence in the introduction to the three houses image, which sees Christ start a conversation with his spiritual bride-to-be about the preparation of their connubial homes:

> I, þe same þat spekis with þe, am maker of all þinge of noght, and noght made. Bifor me was noþinge, ne mai eftir me, for I was euir and euir sall be. I ame also lorde, whose power mai noȝt be withstonden, and of whome is all power and lordeshipe. I speke to þe as a man to his wife.[28]

This characterization of Christ underscores his profound power and majesty. Christ is the creator of everything on earth, and therefore of all the goods that will fill the three houses that he intends to share with his spiritual spouse. By the end of his narration of his power over the world and all that is in it, Christ wishes to speak to Bridget on a much more domestic level, as a husband would communicate with his spouse. It is as though Christ's colossal power over the broadest imaginable space, stretching across time to encompass even those places and items that are not yet created, is ultimately translated into the patriarchal authority of an aristocratic husband over the finite realm of his estate. It might, furthermore, be interpreted as the legitimizing of Bridget's fantasy of material acquisition, which could be otherwise understood as demonstrating an excessive interest in worldly goods. Indeed, elsewhere in the allegory, Bridget appears somewhat uneasy with her consistent valorization of material acquisition. The narration of the filling of the second house, which should be stocked with different kinds of cloth, contains an interjection from the Virgin Mary, in which the celestial mother-in-law reminds Bridget that St. Lawrence never coveted luxurious fabrics, as they might constitute a distraction from the bodily agonies suffered by the crucified Christ.[29] The fact that Bridget introduces the allegory by having Christ translate his omnipotence into the power of a wealthy husband, who would, of course, invest significantly in material goods salves the potential criticism of its somewhat consumerist imagery. Bridget's gathering of the items that will ensure the protection and cleansing of the devout soul is also a celebration of the world, both material and that not yet made, that Christ created.

---

[28] 'I, who speaks to you now, am the creator of all that is made and not yet made. Before me there was nothing, nor anything after me, for I was ever and ever shall be. I am also [the] lord, whose power cannot be withstood, from whom comes all power and lordship. I speak to you as a man would speak to his wife' (Ellis, *Liber*, p. 180, ll. 31–5).

[29] Ellis, *Liber*, pp. 183–4, ll. 1–13, 28–36.

The persistent association of virtue and a successful spiritual marriage with the processes of acquisition and filling is subsequently underscored in Bridget's rendering of the act of confession, which departs significantly from the penitential metaphors of the *Doctrine*. As suggested in the broad summary of the allegory's content, the animals that Bridget is instructed to put into the third house symbolize confessional practice, as they carry the soul closer to God. Before they can set off on this most important of spiritual journeys, however, they must be plentifully fed:

> Sho bi confession is ilke dai more nere and more nere vnto God, for right as a beste, þe ofter and bettir he is fede, þe strongere he is to bere a charge, and þe fairer to þe sight, right so confession, þe oftir þat it is made and þe more beseli, bothe of þe smallest sinnes and gretest, þe more it helpis and forthirs þe saule and makes it clerer in þe siȝt of God.[30]

While the *Doctrine* conceives of confession in terms of the domestic labour of emptying the self of impurities, leaving behind only the most essential spiritual furniture, Bridget understands it as a practice through which one ensures that the soul is copiously stocked with virtues. When one undertakes confession, and the soul moves ever closer to God, the material goods that one has gathered facilitate this spiritual progression; the well-filled household underpins successful penance. Furthermore, the beast itself has been 'filled', in a sense, with sufficient food to prevent it from faltering in the face of the onslaught of sin. Despite her occasional anxieties about appearing excessively interested in material goods, Bridget's allegory of the three houses repeatedly conflates material and spiritual wealth, as the well-stocked household provides the most important tools for ensuring a successful union with Christ.

As this chapter moves towards its conclusion, the aim is not simply to make the somewhat facile observation that different allegories have divergent resonances; this is bound to be the case. It is inevitable, of course, that the male writer of the *Doctrine*, a penitential manual, takes a wholly different approach to the crafting of his text from an author such as Bridget, a female visionary, as the works have such different purposes. While the author of the *Doctrine* is tasked with guiding his female readers towards eventual union with God, Bridget is recording the visions she receives directly from the divine. Rather, the suggestion in this chapter is that one of the most fascinating aspects of domestic imagery in Middle English devotional literature is that the household sphere has such a variable set of symbolic resonances. Very often, this most familiar and emotionally significant space transcends the psychological borders of the real and the imaginary – a point expanded upon as this chapter draws to a close.

---

[30] 'Through confession, one draws closer to God every day. Just as an animal is stronger against a charge the better he is fed, as well as fairer to look at, frequent and diligent confession of both the smallest and biggest sins will help the soul to be more visible to God' (Ellis, *Liber*, p. 188, ll. 7–12).

When the author of the *Doctrine* instructs his reader to welcome Christ into the house of her heart, might a reader such as Purdans model her imagination of this domestic space upon the material one in which she is undertaking her reading? Upon reading Bridget's allegory of the three houses in the *Liber*, Purdans might perhaps map this fantasy of material acquisition onto the mercantile culture of the town in which she lived, this urban economy enabling her to purchase goods for her own house. For the Franciscan nuns at Bruisyard, however, who encountered these texts in the convent following Purdans's bequest, reading about Bridget's lavishly arrayed marital homes would be grounded in the realm of the imaginary. This point is emphatically underscored when one examines a fifteenth-century rule for minoresses, which defines quotidian life and the arrangement of living space in terms of a steadfast commitment to material poverty. In a discussion of sleeping arrangements in the convent, the author of the rule instructs only the most modest furnishing, coupled with sparse adornments:

> Eche may haue a sacke i-fillid wiþ strawe or wiþ hey, oþer ellis a cowche in stede of a sacke & a wollin cloþe buystus I-spred aboue & a cusschin I-couerid wiþ linnyn cloþe, I-stoppid wiþ hey or strawe or grete wolle or federis, like as þe abbesse schal ordeyne.[31]

This is a carefully regulated domestic sphere, perhaps closer in character to the imagined household of the *Doctrine*, in which comfort is minimal and devotion to the scarcity that defines the Franciscan rule is manifest in one's rejection of material goods. Most interestingly, the author of the rule advises that the minoress might own a cushion. Given its status as a consumer item that might be interpreted as a marker of wealth, this seems a rather risky item to place within the minoress's domestic sphere, as it pulls her towards a world that she ought to have left behind, and that she might now only experience imaginatively. The vocabulary of domesticity, from the broader space of the household to the items that adorn it, has a markedly versatile set of resonances. These multifarious meanings would challenge the fifteenth-century female readers of devotional texts such as the *Doctrine* and the *Liber* to navigate the differences between their real and imaginary experience of the household sphere, during a cultural moment that saw the emotional pull of 'home' grow ever greater.

---

[31] 'Each [minoress] may have a sleeping bag filled with straw or hay, or a small mattress instead, with a rough woollen cloth spread over it, and a cushion covered with linen cloth, stuffed with hay, straw, wool or feathers, as the abbess will determine' (*A Fifteenth-Century Courtesy Book and Two Fifteenth-Century Franciscan Rules*, ed. R. W. Chambers and W. M. Seton (Early English Text Soc., old ser., ccxci, Oxford, 1914), p. 85, ll. 15–19).

12. Tombscape: the tomb of Lady Joan de Mohun in the crypt of Canterbury cathedral*

Diane Heath

This chapter coins the term 'tombscape' for the gendered analysis of the context and the place, space and liminality of the medieval tomb. This analysis is shaped by ways other contributors have discussed gender in terms of landscapes, townscapes and nunscapes and builds upon ideas of monumentality in funerary art studies. A reference or allusion to a specific location invites consideration of other (imagined) places as, for example, the church represented celestial Jerusalem. An analysis of the place and space of Canterbury cathedral crypt allows the specificity of this tombscape to be foregrounded. Of course, other terms remain useful: monumentality has been addressed by a variety of disciplines and broadly defined by the archaeologist Chris Scarre as not only 'something that reminds' but also as a memorial which combined durability and size, and was designed to impress.[1] Art historians, following Erwin Panofsky's work first published over fifty years ago, have explored funerary sculpture in terms of iconography and style, form and function, expense and skill. Perhaps most significantly, they emphasize the tomb's juxtaposition of concealment and presence, since '[b]y concealing the corpse of the deceased in the grave, while simultaneously evoking their presence through a monument, tombs epitomize one of the central functions of art: namely, to render the invisible, visible'.[2] In terms of gender history, when discussing tombs of medieval and early modern women, Nigel Saul has argued that:

---

[*] I am most grateful to Professor Louise Wilkinson, Dr. Sheila Sweetinburgh and the final year undergraduates whom I taught with Sheila on Louise's course on love, sex and marriage at Canterbury Christ Church University, as we held a workshop on this tomb in the cathedral itself, thanks to the kind permission and support of Heather Newton, head of conservation and the dean and chapter of Canterbury cathedral. I should also like to thank my fellow editor, Victoria Blud, for reading an early draft of this chapter.

[1] S. Carre, 'Monumentality', in *The Oxford Handbook of the Archaeology of Ritual and Religion*, ed. T. Insoll (Oxford, 2011), p. 9.

[2] J. Barker, 'Introduction', in *Revisiting the Monument: Fifty Years since Panofsky's Tomb Sculpture*, ed. A. Adams and J. Barker (2016), p. 11.

D. Heath, 'Tombscape: the tomb of Lady Joan de Mohun in the crypt of Canterbury cathedral', in *Gender in medieval places, spaces and thresholds*, ed. V. Blud, D. Heath and E. Klafter (2018), pp. 185–202.

> On the great majority of monuments on which women are depicted, it is the male identity which asserts itself. It is true that many monuments on which women are represented commemorate married couples. Even on those where the woman is shown alone, however, she is depicted as the bearer of a patrilineal discourse; she is invested with, and communicates, male values.[3]

In contrast, Jude Jones has maintained that some medieval women's tombs may be analysed as self-representations, making them female 'agents' and 'mouthpieces of meaning and narrative'.[4] Furthermore, Bonnie Effros considered that some early medieval archaeologists have tended to treat women as 'passive icons of identity' based on 'gender-biased assumptions' about the funerary objects buried with them. This tombscape study explores the debate surrounding the analysis of female tombs as patriarchal expressions, 'passive icons of identity', or 'mouthpieces' by examining a medieval woman's tomb located in Canterbury cathedral crypt.[5]

The argument over tombs' negation versus repression has been continually debated. Paul Binski considered the effigy as an 'erasure' and a 'denial of the facts of decomposition'; instead, Jessica Barker stressed the importance of the body within the monument and the juxtaposition of 'stone and bone'.[6] Nigel Saul has emphasized people rather than bodies and how monuments – particularly brasses – 'bring us closer to the commemorated' despite being 'highly stylized'.[7] While tomb design was important, the material of the funerary monument also spoke to the status (both achieved and desired) of the deceased and their descendants; monumental brasses to the gentry and urban rich proliferated in English churches but alabaster effigies were, as Ann Adams has discussed, 'the normative choice for the nobility', copied from royal French tombs.[8] Alabaster was an expensive material which took time and skill to fashion, and might not have been specified by the deceased but by executors, heirs or even grandchildren (and might long afterwards be altered, moved, or repaired) which means tombs using alabaster effigies and panels had long object lifecycles as highly decorative visual statements of dynastic power. Such tombs were often surrounded by colour even if they were traditionally white effigies on black stone plinths, they occupied a great deal of sacred space, and were looked up to when the congregation was praying or sitting (from the fourteenth century when pews were introduced).[9] Yet place as well as space mattered; permissions for medieval tombs had to be sought and usually involved payment and there are indications of problems surrounding the encroachment of such tombs into the altar spaces.[10] If it is to match landscape and townscape studies, medieval tombscapes must also map the surrounding necropolis, explore the associated environments of the building(s) and hinterland (including other external graveyards) and pay attention to the powerful symbolism and agency of belief in life after death and the tensions such faith might arouse.

---

[3] N. Saul, 'The monuments of women', in N. Saul, *English Church Monuments in The Middle Ages: History and Representation* (Oxford, 2009), pp. 290–310, at p. 292.

[4] J. Jones, 'Embodied shadows: reading gender issues embedded in early modern tomb effigies and mortuary memorials 1500–1680', in *Monuments and Monumentality: Across Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. M. Penman (Donnington, 2013), pp. 79–90, at p. 90.

[5] B. Effros, 'Dressing conservatively: women's brooches as markers of ethnic identity?', in *Gender in the Early Medieval World: East and West, 300–900*, ed. L. Brubaker and J. M. H. Smith (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 165–84, at p. 167, also discussed by R. Gilchrist, 'Sex and gender', in *The Oxford Handbook of Archaeology*, ed. B. Cunliffe, C. Gosden and R. Joyce (Oxford, 2009), pp. 1029–47, at p. 1042.

[6] See P. Binski, *Medieval Death: Ritual and Representation* (1996), p. 149: '[The] skeleton in the cupboard of medieval funeral art [is] namely its denial of the facts of decomposition in engendering memory' and J. Barker, 'Stone and bone: the corpse, the effigy and the viewer in late-medieval tomb sculpture', in Adams and Barker, *Revisiting the Monument*, pp. 113–36, p. 131.

[7] N. Saul, *Death, Art, and Memory in Medieval England: the Cobham Family and Their Monuments, 1300–1500* (Oxford, 2001), p. 291.

This canopied tomb is 240 cm high, 215 cm long and 85 cm wide and stands on a chamfered plinth. Red and blue paint traces on the vault of the canopy and on the base of the tomb indicate the original painting scheme, although the outer canopy is missing. Under its battered alabaster effigy, this tomb houses the mortal remains of Lady Joan de Mohun, a Lady of the Order of the Garter, who died in 1404. Placed near (but not quite in) one of the holiest spaces within Canterbury cathedral, the Undercroft chapel of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Joan also lay almost – but again not quite – directly beneath the shrine of Thomas Becket. This location invested her resting place with a double sacrality and a double liminality. This chapter briefly investigates Joan's life and then explores her liminal resting place in two ways: first, her unprecedented but not unalloyed access to a most sacred monastic space is examined via the standing architecture and written evidence for her tomb; and second, the direction of her effigy's stony gaze is probed in terms of lay piety and courtly culture. Canterbury cathedral, founded by St. Augustine in *c.*601, was a veritable powerhouse of sanctity and prayer, which Barrie Dobson called the 'most efficacious . . . in the kingdom'. Moreover it housed the holiest and most popular pilgrimage shrine in Britain, that of St. Thomas Becket, martyred in his cathedral on 29 December 1070.[11] The cathedral was a Benedictine priory and acted as the mausoleum for its archbishops and priors. Its monks were buried in a cemetery in the precincts to the north-east of the cathedral, while a lay cemetery existed to the south.[12] For centuries, few laymen (and even fewer women) achieved interment inside the Mother Church of England and this only changed after the burial of the Black Prince there in 1376 when generous lay patronage in return for interment permitted essential renovation and rebuilding works.[13] So what does an examination of Joan's tomb and its location add to our understanding of late medieval female elite religious piety and familial devotion? What is being memorialized here – family, lineage, or is there a more personal and politicized salvation mission statement? If the latter, does this indicate Joan represented herself as a more independent and powerful figure than we might at first appreciate?

---

[8] A. Adams, 'Revealed/concealed: monumental brasses on tomb chests – the examples of John I, Duke of Cleves, and Catherine of Bourbon', in Adams and Barker, *Revisiting the Monument*, pp. 160–83, p. 162.

[9] 'Before the 14th century it seems that congregational seating of any sort was fairly uncommon ... During the 15th century, the construction of benches for use in church gathered momentum', C. Marsh, 'Sacred space in England, 1560–1640: the view from the pew', *Jour. Eccles. History*, liii (2002), 286–311, at p. 291.

[10] N. Saul, *English Church Monuments in the Middle Ages: History and Representation* (Oxford, 2009), p. 118.

Lady Joan de Mohun, née Burghersh, was a wealthy noblewoman of Kent, who married her uncle's ward, Sir John de Mohun of Dunster, Somerset in around 1341.[14] The couple had three surviving daughters: Elizabeth (later countess of Salisbury, following her excellent match); Matilda (d. 1397), who married John, Lord Strange of Knockin and the only daughter whose son, Richard, survived; and Philippa, who married three times, last and most splendidly of all to Edward, duke of York.[15] Joan's husband, John, was an original member of the Order of the Garter and a friend of the Black Prince. Furthermore, Joan's brother, Bartholomew Burghersh, was also a founder member of the Order and Joan and her daughter Elizabeth were appointed female members and allowed to wear Garter livery in 1384.[16] When John died in September 1375 he was buried with other family members at Bruton in Somerset, as his will stipulated.[17] However, Joan's widowhood was not spent in quiet seclusion awaiting her interment at his side; her life at the royal court continued, except for a brief exile by the Lords Appellant in 1387.[18] This exile is itself an indication that she was considered an influential figure and her importance at court is emphasized by the gift of Leeds Castle in Kent from Queen Anne of Bohemia, consort of Richard II, and her royal connections are also indicated by the presence of one of John of Gaunt's daughters, Philippa (later queen of Portugal), who grew up in her household.[19] Joan seems to have been a consummate courtier, obtaining grace and favour through her Garter connections despite lacking the immense wealth usually necessary for sustaining a suitably luxurious lifestyle at a royal court. This lack of funds is inferred from her husband signing over the chief of his estates for the benefit of Joan before his death, as well as including creditors in his will.[20] Continued indebtedness may then have been the reason Joan sold his family estate and castle after John's death even though Dunster had originally been given to the de Mohuns by William the Conqueror.[21] Elizabeth Luttrell bought the estate for the sum of 5,000 marks in 1376 (over £1.5 million today), although Joan retained the rights to Dunster Castle for her lifetime.[22] In essence, Joan disinherited her daughters; they later tried to render their mother's contract with the Luttrells null and void but to no avail. Joan's life does not have a patrilineal focus on land or legacy; Joan's only male heir, her grandson Richard, is not even mentioned in her will; and debts which may have led her to sell the castle in 1376 did not prevent her giving £33 13*s* and 4*d* (over £23,000 today) in 1371 for the Canterbury cathedral undercroft chapel.[23]

---

[11] D. Heath, 'Monastic culture in early medieval Canterbury, 597–1220', in *Early Medieval Kent*, ed. S. Sweetinburgh (Woodbridge, 2015), pp. 165–87, at p. 166; B. Dobson, 'The monks of Canterbury in the later middle ages 1220–1540', in *A History of Canterbury Cathedral*, ed. P. Collinson, N. Ramsay and M. Sparks (Canterbury, rev. edn., 2002), pp. 69–153, at p. 134.

[12] On the monks' cemetery see S. Sweetinburgh, 'Remembering the dead at dinnertime', in *Everyday Objects: Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture and its Meanings*, ed. T. Hamling and C. Richardson (Farnham, 2010), pp. 257–66, at p. 261.

[13] F. Woodman, 'Kinship and architectural patronage in late medieval Canterbury: the Hollands, the Lady chapel and the empty tomb', in *Medieval Art, Architecture and Archaeology at Canterbury*, ed. A. Bovey (British Archaeological Association Transactions, xxxv, Leeds, 2013), pp. 245–60, at p. 246.

[14] For a detailed full biography of Joan and her patronage of the *Mohun Chronicle*, see J. Wogan-Browne, 'Mother or stepmother to History? Joan de Mohun and her chronicle', in *Motherhood, Religion, and Society in Medieval Europe, 400–1400: Essays Presented to Henrietta Leyser*, ed. C. Leyser and L. Smith (Farnham, 2011), pp. 297–316.

[15] See Wogan-Browne, 'Mother or stepmother to History?', p. 310.

---

[16] H. E. L. Collins, *The Order of the Garter 1348–1461: Chivalry and Politics in Late Medieval England* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 79–83, table p. 302.

[17] R. W. Dunning, 'Mohun, John, second Lord Mohun (1320?–1375)', in *O.D.N.B.* <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/18883> [accessed 21 Sept. 2018].

[18] N. Saul, *Richard II* (New York, 1999), p. 370, n. 16.

[19] J. Stratford, *Richard II and the English Royal Treasure* (Woodbridge, 2013), p. 95..

[20] Dunning, *'Mohun, John'.*

[21] H. C. Maxwell Lyte, *A History of Dunster and the Families Mohun and Luttrell* (2 vols., 1909), i. 59–60.

[22] S. J. Payling, 'Legal right and dispute resolution in late medieval England: the sale of the lordship of Dunster', *Eng. Hist. Rev.*, cxxvi (2011), 17–43, at p. 27. T.N.A., *Currency Converter* <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency/results.asp#mid> [accessed 16 Sept. 2017].

[23] C. E. Woodruff, 'The chapel of Our Lady in the crypt of Canterbury cathedral', *Archaeol. Cant.*, xxxviii (1936), 153–71, at p. 157; two further payments of £20 were made in successive years as noted in the Priory's *Treasury Accounts Book*, C.C.A.L. DCc MA1. In

Such lavish gifts to Canterbury cathedral priory together with her links to the royal court and her connections to Thomas Arundel, archbishop of Canterbury and to the prior Thomas Chillenden help to explain how Lady Joan de Mohun succeeded in gaining access to this sacrosanct male monastic space (previously reserved for the monastery's archbishops and priors). These links do not explain the dynastic tensions that led to her later interment so far from her husband's burial place. Joan de Mohun did not commission a sweet hand-holding effigy evincing medieval marital bliss – such as the famous Arundel tomb Larkin saw as epitomizing 'what will survive of us is love'.[24] Nor is her effigy a hymn to marriage such as the one constructed in 1439 on the orders of Margaret Holland, who lies sandwiched between both her husbands in the Lady chapel of Canterbury cathedral.

An examination of the space and place of this crypt tomb adjacent to the Undercroft chapel of the Virgin Mary is required, to discover how and by whom the chapel was embellished in the late fourteenth century. Edward Woodstock, the Black Prince, buried with such pomp in the Trinity chapel at Canterbury cathedral, had asked for his tomb to be placed in the main Undercroft chapel dedicated to the Virgin Mary in his will made the day before his death on 8 June 1376, in which he also endowed the chapel with sundry rich gifts:[25]

> n're corps d'etre enseveliz . . . en mylieu de la chapelle de n're dame Undercrofte, droitement devant l'autier, siq' le bout de n're tombe devers les pees soit dix pees loinz de l'autier, et qe mesme la tombe soit de marbre de bone masonerie faite. . . Item nous donnons et devisons a l'autier de n're dame en la chappelle surdite n're blank vestiment tout entier diappree d'une viue d'azure et auxi le frontel qe l'Evesqe d'Exceftre nous donna, q'est de l'assumption de n're dame en mylieu sev'er d'or et d'autre ymagerie, et un tabernacle de l'assumpcioun de n're dame qe le dit evesq' no' donna auxi, et deux grandez chandelabres d'argent q' sont tortillez, et deux bacyns de noz armez, et un grand chalix suzorre et enameillez des armes de Garrenne ove deux cruetz taillez come deux angeles, pur servir a mesme l'autier perpetuelment, sainz jamez le mettre en autre oeps p' nul meschief.[26]

1378–80 she paid for the iron rails at the west end of the chapel too, see Wogan-Browne, 'Mother or stepmother to History', p. 313, n. 53.

[24] P. Larkin, 'An Arundel tomb', in *The Whitsun Weddings* (1964), pp. 45–6, at l. 42.

[25] C. Given-Wilson, 'The exequies of Edward III and the royal funeral ceremony in late medieval England', *Eng. Hist. Rev.*, cxxiv (2009), 257–82, at p. 279.

[26] 'our body to be buried ... in the middle of the chapel of Our Lady of the Undercroft, right in front of the altar, so the end of the tomb is no more than ten feet from the altar, and that the same tomb be made of marble of good masonry ... Item: we give and devise to the altar of Our Lady in the above-mentioned chapel our white suit diapered with a blue vine and also the frontal [altar panel] which the Bishop of Exeter gave us, which depicts Our

This dying wish led later antiquarians, such as Canon Scott Robertson, to think that Edward had funded all the fourteenth-century renovations to this chapel.[27] Legg and Hope thought that his tomb in the crypt had been taken by Lady Joan de Mohun, asking whether

> another tomb in the church had been moved, and was it the tomb of Edward, prince of Wales? His will strictly enjoins that he be buried immediately in front of the altar beside which lady Joan de Mohun's tomb still stands, yet his tomb is now to the south of the site of the shrine in the chapel of St. Thomas.[28]

However, there is no documentary evidence that the Black Prince funded the renovations to the Undercroft chapel to the Virgin Mary, although he did pay for two chantry priests.[29] Furthermore, the Black Prince's will clearly stated that his tomb was to be in the middle of the chapel rather than adjacent to it, which is where Lady de Mohun's tomb is situated. Legg and Hope may have doubted that a medieval woman might make independent arrangements for her own burial and merely take advantage of a change in male circumstances but C. E. Woodruff argued she did fund her own exequies when he translated her chantry deed

> [Joan de Mohun] shall be buried in the tomb which the said lady at her own costs and charges has caused to be constructed near the altar of blessed Mary in the crypt of the said church of Canterbury, which is commonly called *Undircroft*; and that the body of the said lady, when it shall have been buried there, shall not be moved nor the name of the tomb changed, but shall be preserved honourably.[30]

The Priory's fine copy in their *Martyrology* confirms this deed, and the chantry was paid for by monies from her manor of Selgrave.[31] Joan's

---

Lady of the Assumption in the middle in gold and other imagery, and a tabernacle [a box reserved for the wafers] also with the Assumption of our Lady which the same bishop gave us too, and two great silver twisted candlesticks, and two basins with our [heraldic] arms, a great gilt and enamelled chalice with the arms of Warrenne and two cruets fashioned in the form of angels to serve at the same altar in perpetuity, not be used elsewhere on any account' (*A Collection of all the Wills now Known to be Extant of the Kings and Queens of England*, ed. J. Nichols (1780), pp. 66–77).

[27] W. Scott Robertson, 'The crypt of Canterbury cathedral, part 2', *Archaeol. Cant.*, xiii (1880), 500–51, at p. 532.

[28] J. Legg and W. Hope, *Inventories of Christchurch Canterbury; with Historical and Topographical Introductions and Illustrative Documents* (1902), p. 99.

[29] Nichols, *Wills*, p. 71.

[30] Woodruff, 'Chapel of Our Lady', p. 169. The deed is copied into the Priory's *Martyrology*, now British Library Arundel MS. 68, fos. 61r–v with a decorated initial with Lady de Mohun's heraldic crest which unites the Burghersh and Mohun devices.

[31] Brit. Libr., Arundel MS. 68, fos. 61r–v, 'corpus dicte domina Johane de Mohoun cum

access to the sacred space in the Undercroft was granted because her earlier donations in the 1360s and 1370s (made before the Black Prince's death) had allowed the renovations to be made to the crypt chapel of the Virgin Mary. Her timely generosity prevented other lay aristocrats gazumping her tomb space but her resting place did not enjoy the central space the Black Prince had stipulated in his will, inside the chapel itself and directly beneath the shrine of St. Thomas in the Trinity chapel above (although instead he was buried beside the shrine of St. Thomas in the Trinity chapel itself). This is where Cardinal Morton's heart was later buried and the plan of the crypt drawn up by Woodruff incidentally demonstrates where the Black Prince wanted his tomb and how much space in the little chapel it would have taken ('c' on the plan).

Joan's deed required that her chantry priests celebrated daily masses in the Undercroft chapel. On certain days, her chantry priests would sing masses at St. James's shrine next to St. Thomas's, wearing the vestments she had specified from material fashioned from her brightly coloured bed hangings, embroidered with her heraldry, to be recognizable by pilgrims, clerks and monks.[32] Would this make up for not being directly beneath the shrine of St. Thomas? The holiness radiating from the Becket shrine was believed to suffuse the whole cathedral and her position nearly under the shrine was as close as a non-royal laywoman could hope to achieve. Whereas the Black Prince had wanted to be buried in the middle of the Undercroft chapel, Joan instead lies against the south wall. Christopher Wilson pointed out that there was originally a double row of columns on this south side (as opposed to a single set on the north side), and considered that, as the outer columns were not properly supported (and accordingly they have not survived), this loss 'explains the asymmetrical placing of the effigy on the tomb chest.[33] Yet there may be another reason her effigy is at an angle and the foot of her tomb intrudes slightly into the chapel space. Those fine columns supporting the delicate stone tracery allowed her effigy unimpeded sightlines to the altar of the blessed Virgin.[34] If her effigy was

---

ab hac luce migraverit sepelictur in tumba quam dicta domina sumptibus suis et expensis constru fecat prope altaris beate marie…'. The Deed records Richard II licenced the priory to receive income from Joan's Selgrave Manor; Henry IV's *Exemplification* re-approved this on 28 Oct. 1399, C.C.A.L. DCc/ChAnt/O/133.

[32] C.C.A.L. DCc/Register A, fos. 231–2.

[33] C. Wilson, 'The medieval monuments', in Collinson, Ramsey and Sparks, *A History of Canterbury Cathedral*, pp. 451–510, at p. 508.

[34] St. Peter's, Sandwich has double effigies, possibly of Sir Thomas Elys (mayor 1370–2, d. *c.*1392) and his wife Margaret, close to the chancel step. Their eyes look up to where the chalice would have been raised, see 18th-century print in British Library, King George III's Personal Coloured Views Collection <http://george3.splrarebooks.com/collection/view/Effigy-to-

not at an angle and her tomb set straight to the east, such 'sight' of the altar would be impossible.[35] Perhaps even more importantly, her sightlines would have permitted her effigy to 'see' the raising of the host by her chantry priests in front of the altar. This effigial view is more difficult to establish as the face of the effigy is so damaged but the plinth of her tomb is high enough to make this elevation possible. Joan's bequests included a chalice worth forty shillings to be used at her masses, a missal and the rich material for vestments for her chantry priests that had been specified in her earlier indenture and which are all the items needed for her effigy to witness the masses and prayers for her soul she pleads for in her epitaph. The proposed placement of the Black Prince's tomb in the middle of the chapel would not have secured such sightlines as he would have gazed instead straight up to the chapel ceiling, or to his tester, which would have given him a presence hard to avoid in the narrow chapel but would have equally prevented his effigy's view of the altar. Joan's liminal tomb, like a barnacle on the hull of the chapel, was positioned to be in the top spot, that is '*dextro cornu magnum altaris*', at the right corner of the high altar. This was as clever as it was respectful because it avoided tensions concerning this sacred liturgical space, for her tomb did not impact on the space before the high altar as it lay outside of the chapel, looking in. The *sedilia*, or seats, for the officiating clergy remained in place and unimpeded.[36] So the liminality of Joan's tomb gave benefits which a more central position in the Undercroft chapel, though more prestigious, would have lacked. Furthermore, her tomb was clearly visible, abutting the Blessed Virgin Mary's shrine in the heart of the cathedral, which meant it was ideally positioned to gather prayers for her soul from pilgrims.

Having introduced the key evidence, we now delve deeper into the cultural aspects found in the materiality of Joan's effigial tomb. Although her chantry deed was drawn up in 1395 and her tomb built between 1396 and 1399, Joan did not die until 1404 and spent her last few years at Meister Omers, the residence reserved for honoured guests of the cathedral's prior, a further indication of her wealth and standing. Extant architectural, documentary and literary evidence establishes both the stability and frailty of the interconnected and gendered networks of confraternity, court and female

---

Sir-Thomas-Ellis-Elys-and-his-wife-Margaret-in-St-Peters-Church-S> [accessed 20 Sept. 2017].

[35] I am indebted to Dr. Sheila Sweetinburgh for pointing out the importance of effigies 'observing' the Host.

[36] J. A. Cameron, 'Competing for *Dextro Cornu Magnum Altaris*: funerary monuments and liturgical seating in English churches', in Adams and Barker, *Revisiting The Monument*, pp. 137–55.

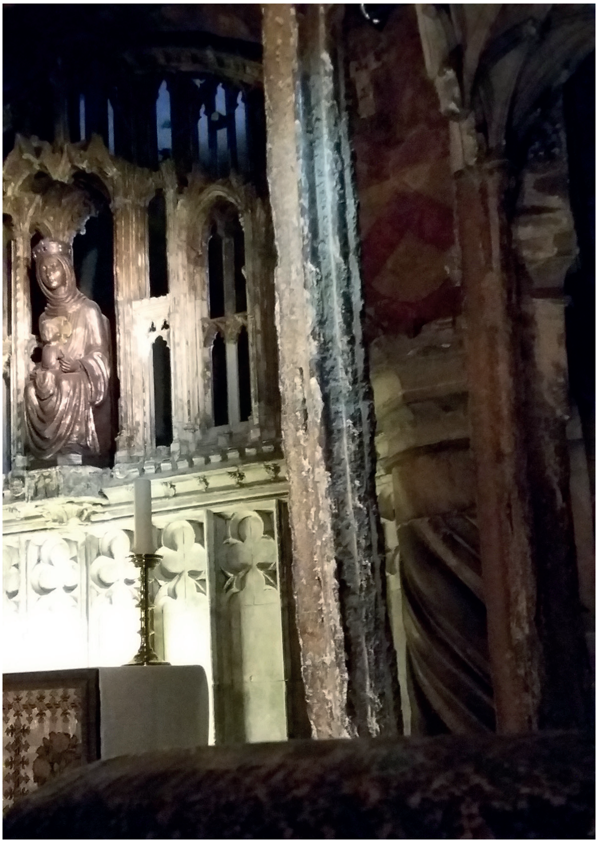


Figure 12.1. Tomb of Joan de Mohun and altar of Blessed Virgin Mary, Canterbury cathedral crypt; the foregrounded nebulé headdress demonstrates the effigial sightline of the altar (photograph by author, with permission).

chivalry alluded to by her tomb despite its current brutal disfigurement. For what was once so lovely, is now severely damaged; this probably occurred mostly in the eighteenth century when the crypt was a builders' storage area, as John Dart's book of 1726 reveals the tomb was undamaged then.[37] The tomb has lost its outer stone canopy and nearly all its paintwork. Joan's effigy has had the face obliterated, the arms and hands (probably in prayer) broken off, numerous graffiti carved into the body – even the dog at her feet has lost its head. This damage makes the effigy not only defaced but faceless; a misrepresentation and misrecognition of its identity and purpose because now eyeless, the effigy no longer 'sees' the altar and, now armless, is no longer praying. Now only her tomb's significant position impinging into the chapel's altar space, the inscription, and her effigy's hairstyle and clothing are left to express her piety and her patronal and noble status.[38]

---

[37] J. Dart, *The History and Antiquities of the Cathedral Church of Canterbury, and the Once-Adjoining Monastery* (1726), pp. 20, 90 and plate p. 30.

Joan's effigy was carved in the style of court dress of the 1370–80s but it may have been carved later than these dates, as effigies sometimes depict styles worn by the person earlier in their life, rather than clothes current at their death.[39] Despite the damage and graffiti the effigy has sustained, it is easy to see that the hair and dress are richly decorated in the height of court fashion of the late fourteenth century. The hair is carved as gathered into a net headdress in the 'nebulé' style, with plaits encased in jewelled gold net arranged squarely around the face with a jewelled circlet at the back.[40]

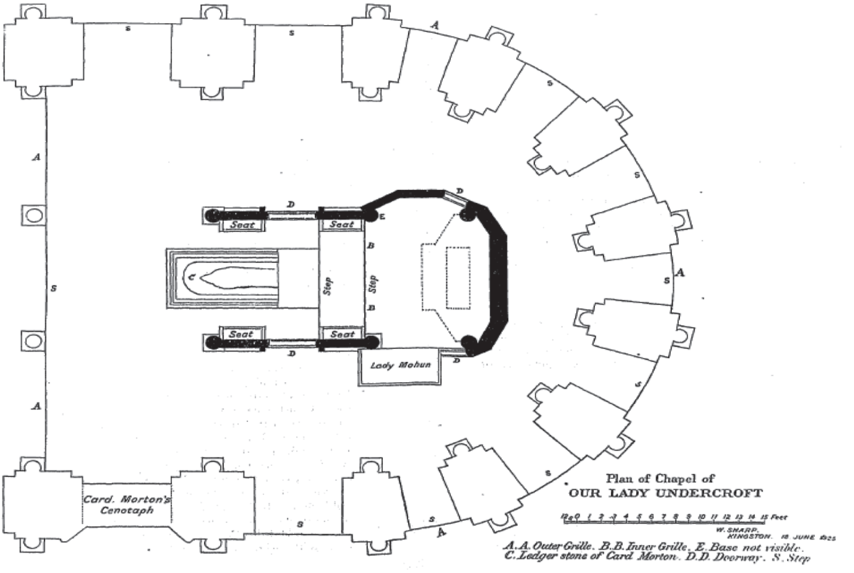

Seat
Seat
Seat
Seat
Step
Step
Lady Mohun
Card. Morton's Cenotaph
Plan of Chapel of
OUR LADY UNDERCROFT
12 6 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 Feet
W. SHARP, KINGSTON. 18 JUNE 1925
A.A. Outer Grille. B.B. Inner Grille. E. Base not visible.
C. Ledger stone of Card Morton. D.D. Doorway. S. Step

Figure 12.2. Plan of Canterbury cathedral crypt chapel of the Blessed Virgin Mary from C. E. Woodruff, *Arch. Cant.* xxxviii (1936), between pp. 164–5.

Wilson deplored this ornate style as 'bizarre' but it was considered courtly, expensive, lavish and beautiful at the time and two carvings in Canterbury cathedral depict similar hairstyles, one of which is likely to represent Joan, Fair Maid of Kent, wife to the Black Prince.[41] The clothes of the effigy are not indicative of widowhood; her *cote-hardi*, a side-less waistcoat which was once painted with a golden brocade pattern has cut-away side panels to show off a jewelled girdle, revealed by Stothard in his 1817 engravings.[42] The *cote-hardi* is decorated with large jewelled buttons, each with a central heraldic '*lion statant*' motif, a very distinctive royal device used by John of Gaunt and his brother, the Black Prince.[43] Wilson likened the huge buttons to those worn by Mickey Mouse but that is to miss the point perhaps, for although Wilson noted John of Gaunt gave such buttons as presents he did not consider that Joan's commission of an effigy wearing jewelled accoutrements bearing such a device might be construed as a political statement of support for Gaunt, while simultaneously referring to the Black Prince.[44] This would have been a prescient move by Joan, as the usurpation of Richard II's throne by Henry IV, son of John of Gaunt, was achieved with the support of Thomas Arundel, then exiled archbishop of Canterbury, in 1399.

---

[38] The inscription reads 'por dieu priez por l'ame Johane Burwaschs que fut Dame de Mohun' (Pray to God for the soul of Joan Burwasch who was Lady de Mohun).

[39] E. Wincott Heckett, 'Tomb effigies and archaic dress in sixteenth-century Ireland', in *Clothing Culture 1350–1650*, ed. C. Richardson (Aldershot, 2003), pp. 63–76.

[40] This nebulé hairstyle is described by Saul, *English Monuments*, p. 300.

Entries in the *Register* of John of Gaunt and Jenny Stratford's recent edition of the *Treasure Roll* of Richard II allow a greater appreciation of Joan's place in the inner Ricardian court circle, strengthened still further when her daughter Philippa married the king's youngest brother, Edward of York, in 1398. Gaunt's *Register* includes several gifts to Joan, such as a filet of '*gros*' pearls (no. 1133, given in December 1372) and a beryl '*hanape*' or cup decorated with gold (no. 1343, given in April 1373). The *Register* also records gifts from her, such as a silver-gilt cup John of Gaunt then regifted to Alice Perrers, mistress of Edward III (also no. 1343). Three gifts from Joan to the king are recorded in Richard's *Treasure Roll*: a Hart badge (one of Richard II's devices, R.296); a rosary, probably a gift for Queen Isabelle, valued at £3 (R.393) and; most interestingly, probably another gift for Isabelle, a gold mirror with the Annunciation in mother of pearl on the outside which opened to reveal the Virgin in enamel on the inside with the legend

---

[41] Wilson, 'Medieval monuments', p. 508; the stone carving of Joan of Kent is in the now Huguenot chapel, formerly the double chantry chapel of the Black Prince; the other carving is in the north aisle of the nave.

[42] C. A. Stothard, *The Monumental Effigies of Great Britain: Selected from our Cathedrals and Churches* (1817) <http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/stothard1817/0290> and profile <http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/stothard1817/0292> [accessed 20 Aug. 2017].

[43] '*Botons*' in silver, gold and sometimes bejewelled, were often given in sets, see *John of Gaunt's Register*, 1371–5, ed. S. Armitage-Smith (2 vols., Camden Society, 3rd ser., xx–xxi, 1911), ii. 1133, which also mentions Joan de Mohun in the following entries: nos. 1133, 1212, 1342, 1343, 1661, 1694 and 1716.

[44] Wilson, 'Medieval monuments', p. 508.

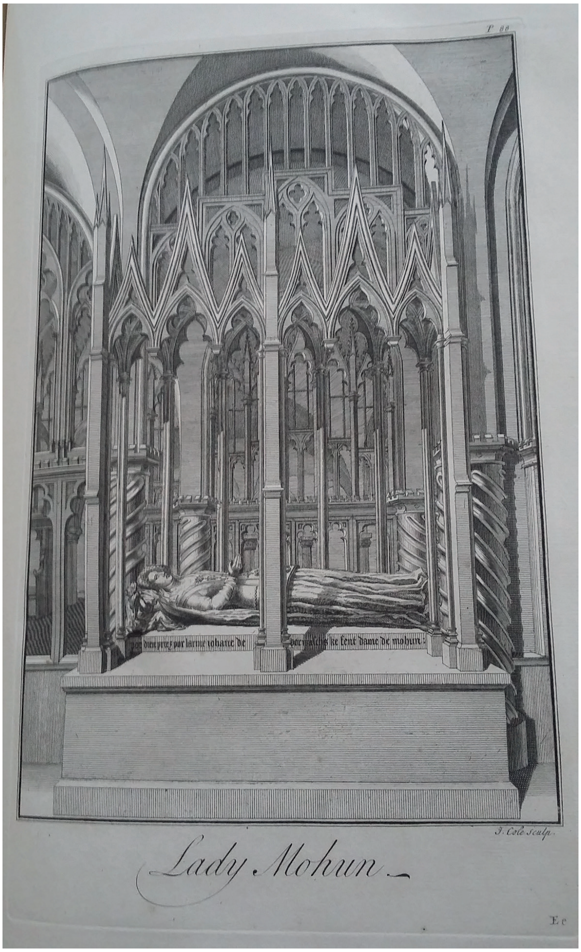

P 88
por dieu priez por lalme iohane de
borwaschs ke fent dame de mohun:
J. Cole sculp.
Lady Mohun
Ee

Figure 12.3. Joan de Mohun's tomb from an engraving in John Dart's *The History and Antiquities of the Cathedral Church of Canterbury* (1726), Canterbury cathedral archives, courtesy of the Chapter of Canterbury cathedral.

'*nostre dame de cokill*' valued at £12 3*s* 4*d* (R.826). This gift from Joan was most appropriate for the young queen, aptly mirrored Joan's own highly normative piety towards the Blessed Virgin Mary, and is in accord with her tomb's placement as near as possible to the Virgin's chapel at Canterbury.

How does this list of jewels and gifts help us to reflect upon Joan's tomb and tombscape? The answer is fascinating. Both her tomb and effigy were hugely expensive high-value statement pieces in keeping with the costly remodelling of the chapel in a decorative style with elements that resembled designs then current in the chapel in Karlštejn Castle, Bohemia, possibly because the marriage of Richard II to Anne of Bohemia in 1482 may have brought Continental artists to the English royal court.[45] Helen Howard examined the Undercroft chapel to the Virgin Mary in the 1990s and concluded that the heraldic shields around the high altar are later additions. So although the crests of the Burghersh and Mohun families appear to have been on the tomb, we cannot be certain they were in the chapel, nor when the other Order of the Garter crests were added. However, the presence of the tomb of the Black Prince, the founder of the Order, in Canterbury made certain that the cathedral continued to be important to the Order, albeit second to their chapel at Windsor. The Garter knights' heraldry in the chapel linked aristocratic lineage to royal authority and religious devotion to the Virgin Mary and to St. Thomas.

This heraldic lay piety decorated the chapel walls and cloister vaulting.[46] Yet something much more extraordinary was happening on the canopied ceilings of the chapel. Howard noted that the sooty late fourteenth-century ceiling canopies were not originally painted blue (the usual colour to signify heaven and purity) but scarlet and affixed with glass beads to resemble jewels, and mirrored discs with gilded rays to resemble stars which would have reflected the candlelight. On the stone reredos behind the altar stood a figure of the Virgin, the niche for which was gilded and the whole reredos itself was, Howard assessed, 'mordant gilded over a red lead and vermilion ground', which would have provided a tinted pellucid glow.[47] This rich red colour scheme pinpointed with lights made the bottle-shaped chapel a sacrosanct Marian womb, a jewelled reliquary and a celestial golden star-spangled chamber; the most wonderful tombscape for a female effigial gaze. The warm vermilion design signified the colour of the sacred heart of Christ's Passion and symbolized redemption and, as Bale pointed out, also represented Mary's charity (this volume, p. xvi). Such symbolism indicated an interiority and a mode of self-reflection behind the colour scheme's superficial gaudiness.

---

[45] H. Howard, 'The chapel of Our Lady Undercroft, Canterbury cathedral', *Technologia Artis*, iii (1993), 31–4.

[46] Photograph of cloister boss of the Mohun shield, C.C.A.L., glass plate slides & negatives box 6H <https://ims.canterbury-cathedral.org/viewpicture.tlx?containerid=21787383709&pictureid=21787495622> and repainted Mohun and Burghersh family shields in the east alley of the cloisters, C.C.A.L. GPSN Box 13, <https://ims.canterburycathedral.org/viewpicture.tlx?containerid=21787626707&pictureid=21787670122> [both accessed 29 Sept. 2017].

[47] Howard, 'Chapel', p. 32 and p. 34, n. 19.

The direction of the effigy's stony gaze, towards the celestial vision of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the shrine's scarlet-painted starlit ceiling had links to the Ricardian court focus on the cosmos, for example Chaucer's treatise on the Astrolabe. This late fourteenth-century imaginary is expressed particularly memorably in the beautiful Christine de Pizan poem from her *Book of the Queen*, called 'Le chemin de long etude'. The Sibyl guides the narrator Christine to a vision of the celestial spheres and the miniature from her book entitled 'Les belles choses que Cristine veioit oû ciel', depicts Christine de Pizan and the Sibyl standing in a sphere of the cosmos with the stars, moon and sun.[48] Christine's poem (written *c.*1403–4) aptly focused on female agency and highlighted ideas such as the firmament mirroring the body and the soul and the macrocosmic relationship to the microcosm which were well known in Ricardian court culture; was Joan de Mohun looking beyond the Marian altar to heaven?

The Pizan poem reflects the themes of the other literary evidence explored in Wogan-Browne's reading of medieval female agency in the extant opening fragment of the *Mohun Chronicle*.[49] This manuscript was probably commissioned by Joan de Mohun herself.[50] The chronicle describes how Albina, the eldest daughter of a Greek king and the original female founder of Britain (in a story connected to the *Brut* legend), was accused with her sisters of attempted regicide and exiled from Greece in a rudderless boat. Albina and a single sister landed in the south-west of England, where the Mohun lands would eventually lie, whereupon they mated with incubi to produce a race of giants which were only slain when Brut arrived to colonize manfully and so properly civilize Albion and turn it into Britain. Another Albina foundation legend is discussed by Eivor Bekkhus in this book in relation to Irish women cast adrift at sea in rudderless boats. This motif of female seaborne exile has become one of the most readily recognized 'memes' of medieval romance, one that connects across time the disparate themes of 'pollution, guilt, and the fate of nations'.[51] The *Chronicle* perhaps gives more weight to Albina to emphasize the matrilineal rather than patrilineal discourse on inheritance and legitimacy created by Joan and

---

[48] C. de Pizan, *Book of the Queen* (British Library, Harley MS. 4431), dated 1414. Miniature of Sibyl and Christine in the Firmament, fo. 189v, 'The beautiful things Christine saw in the heavens'.

[49] Wogan-Browne, 'Mother or stepmother to history?', pp. 305–6.

[50] J. Spence, 'The Mohun Chronicle: an introduction, edition, and translation', *Jour. of Nottingham Medieval Studies*, lv (2011), 149–216, at p. 164. The manuscript itself is British Library, Additional MS. 62929.

[51] H. Cooper, *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare* (Oxford, 2004), p. 4 on this 'meme', quotation at p. 113 and see pp. 113–6 on Albina.

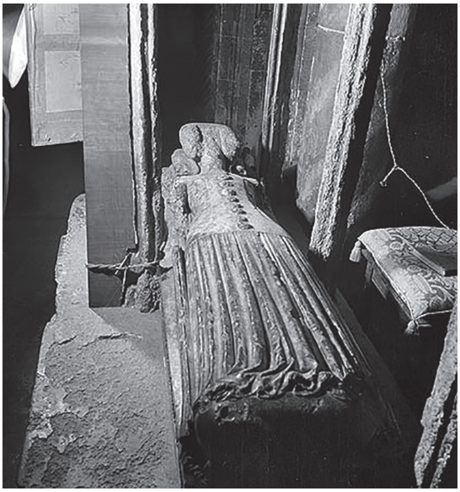


Figure 12.4. Joan de Mohun's tomb photographed by Bill Brandt in 1941.

her daughters, via the imagined landscape of a mythical ferocious Greek queen and her progeny, and so resite and reframe the male-oriented origin myth of the hero, *Brut*. Turning to another medieval romance, both Joan and her daughter Philippa were Ladies of the Garter and although later, Martorell's Catalan epic *Tirant lo Blanc* implies a wider role for women of the Order than mere livery-wearers. Ladies of the Garter took part in Garter ceremonies and celebrations; Martorell writes that they also swore public, highly chivalric oaths never to ask a husband, son or brother to return home from war; to aid them if they were besieged; and to pay up to half their dowries in ransom.[52] These imagined landscapes of medieval romance, chivalry and Ricardian court culture were all drawn upon in the construction of the memorialization of Joan and fashioned into a pious, political and deeply personal statement.

This chapter has sought to investigate how an analysis of Joan's tomb might make the 'invisible' or 'inaudible' women prominent in their own tombscapes again by adding ideas of female agency from Pizan, the *Mohun Chronicle* and *Tirant lo Blanc*, as well as records of Joan's carefully chosen benefactions, the site and design of her own tomb, and her life as a distinguished courtier and member of the inner circle at court before and after her husband's death. Joan's tomb, effigy and the architectural context of her lay patronage make this an important funerary monument.

---

[52] J. Mantorell and M. J. de Galba, *Tirant lo Blanc*, trans. D. Rosenthal (1984), ch. xciii–xcv, pp. 126–7. Martorell visited England in 1439.

Her tomb epitomizes a paradox: the decadence and dignity of the highest quality medieval alabaster sculpture in the re-beautified Undercroft chapel; and yet also, in the tomb's later degradation and defilement, the bodily decay that the beauty of the effigy had previously repressed. Bill Brandt's arresting black and white World War II photographs and subsequently, the careful work of the cathedral's conservation team, have restored the effigy's dignity and identity as 'Johane Burwaschs que fut Dame de Mohun'.

IV. Watch this space!

13. Women's visibility and the 'vocal gaze' at windows, doors and gates in *vitae* from the thirteenth-century Low Countries*

Hannah Shepherd

'Consider the window. Is it simply a void traversed by a line of sight? No', stated Lefebvre in *The Production of Space*.[1] The window, he argued, has two senses and two orientations: inward looking and outward looking. The two orientations are distinctive, but bear the sign of the other. 'Consider the door', Lefebvre next asked his readers.[2] The door is not merely an opening that allows for passage. The door, like the window, is framed. Its frame and surround make the door an object. 'Transitional, symbolic, and functional', the door operates to bring a space to a beginning and an end.[3] Lefebvre concluded that as the threshold of an entrance is a transitional object with ritual significance, crossing boundaries can be analogous with progression. Indeed, windows, doors and gates provide the basis of graduating idioms: 'a window onto', 'opening a door' or 'a gateway to' can denote insight into a hitherto obscured subject. The phrases are implicitly visual: knowledge is acquired when a lens is focused on a tangible object or idea.

This chapter takes the boundaries of windows, doors and gates as depicted in eight Latin *vitae* from the thirteenth-century Low Countries as its focus.[4] Six of the *vitae* describe the lives and holy deeds of women. They

---

[*] An extended version of this chapter can be found in my Ph.D. thesis, 'Neither in the world nor out: space and gender in the Latin saints' *vitae* from the thirteenth-century Low Countries' (unpublished University of Edinburgh Ph.D. thesis, 2017).

[1] H. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. D. Nicholson-Smith (Oxford, 1991, orig. 1974), p. 209.

[2] Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, p. 209.

[3] Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, p. 209.

[4] Goswin of Bossut, *Vita Arnulfii Conversi*, *A.A.S.S.*, 30 June v. 606–31; Goswin of Bossut, *Vita Idae Nivellis*, *Quinque Prudentes Virgins*, ed. C. Henriquez (Antwerp, 1630), pp. 199–297; Hugh of Floreffe, *Vita Ivettae reclusae*, *A.A.S.S.*, 13 Jan., ii. 863–87; Jacques de Vitry, *Vita Mariae Oigniacensis*, *A.A.S.S.*, 23 June, iv. 630–84; *Vita Goberti comes Asperi-montis*, *A.A.S.S.*, 20 Aug., iv. 370–95; *Vita Idae Lewensis*, *A.A.S.S.*, 29 Oct., xiii. 100–35; *Vita Idae Lovaniensis*,

H. Shepherd, 'Women's visibility and the 'vocal gaze' at windows, doors and gates in *vitae* from the thirteenth-century Low Countries', in *Gender in medieval places, spaces and thresholds*, ed. V. Blud, D. Heath and E. Klafter (2018), pp. 205–18.

have been selected for analysis because they contain detailed descriptions of women interacting at windows and doors. In order to explore the gendering of thresholds more fully, I have included two *vitae* of men. They have been chosen because they contain examples of men interacting at gates. *Vitae* typically illustrate the spiritual progression of a saint or blessed individual. As such, authors of *vitae* were rarely concerned with a saint's social environment. It is not surprising that descriptions of the materiality of the window (*fenestra*), door (*ostium* or, less commonly, *fortis*), and gate (*porta*) are scarce in such texts. There is little sense of position, height or size and there is no mention of curtains, grilles or shutters. However, windows, doors and gates provided a stage for saintly acts of inebriation, intercession and penance. Indicative of active and contemplative spirituality, such performances marked a saint's spiritual progress.

As transitional, symbolic and functional boundaries with a multitude of purposes, windows, doors, and gates were renegotiated and redefined through memory and movement. Movement was written not just as a bodily act (passing through) or visual act (looking outwards or inwards). Speech, hearing and silence provided a channel between inner and outer, particularly in the *vitae* of women. In these texts, speech can be interpreted as another form of visibility. This vocal visibility, or 'vocal gaze', facilitated female agency. Thus, these written (and contemporaneously oral) narratives offer an inclusive means to explore the relationship between architectural boundaries and gendered piety. The purpose of the examination of the eight *vitae* is threefold: to explore the gendering of thresholds; to highlight the importance of sensory perception (including speech) to the transformation of space; and to challenge the notion that windows were a dangerous space for women. The first half of this chapter will outline the context of the texts and the existing literature on medieval Christian enclosure and windows. The second half will examine the eight *vitae*.

Marie-Dominique Chenu famously outlined the 'evangelical awakening' of the twelfth century.[5] Although epoch-defining attributions should be treated with caution, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the Low Countries witnessed a proliferation of women and men who led an energetic and conscious Christian life. Due to their ambiguous institutional status, some holy women (*mulieres religiosae*) have been considered as leading religious lives that were liminal or semi-religious.[6] According to

---

A.A.S.S., 13 Apr., ii. 156–89; *Vita sanctae Iulianae virginis*, *A.A.S.S.*, 5 Apr., i. 437–77.

[5] M-D. Chenu, 'The evangelical awakening', in *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century*, ed. J. Taylor and L. K. Little (Chicago, Ill., 1968), pp. 239–69.

[6] E.g., M. Lauwers uses 'semi-religious' in M. Lauwers, 'Expérience béguinale et récit hagiographique: de la "Vita Mariae Oigniacensis" de Jacques de Vitry (vers 1215)', *Journal*

Tanya Stabler Miller, a 'scholarly emphasis on official attitudes', particularly relating to enclosure, has perpetuated a problematic binary between lay and religious.[7] For example, in 1298 Pope Boniface VIII's decree *Periculoso* attempted to draw a sharp distinction between uncloistered religious women and nuns. While the rhetoric of *Periculoso* might have stressed the symbiotic relationship between enclosure and monastic identity, it should not be taken as evidence that thirteenth-century monastic women lived a life that was fundamentally opposed to their unenclosed sisters.[8] Strict claustration was untenable and often undesired: neither active enclosure (rules for nuns leaving the convent) nor passive enclosure (the regulation of outsiders accessing the convent) was absolute.[9] Likewise, some *mulieres religiosae* could lead contemplative lives without enclosure, perhaps best embodied by Marie d'Oignies, the Low Countries' so-called 'proto-beguine'.

Vitae provide an important record of women's contribution to thirteenth-century apostolic trends. Between 1215 and *c.*1290, thirteen *vitae* commemorating the lives of *mulieres religiosae* born in the late twelfth and thirteenth-century Low Countries were written.[10] The thirteenth-century Low Countries' *vitae* provide a particularly interesting case study as, alongside Cistercian nuns, they describe the lives of urban recluses, holy laywomen and 'beguines'. This vocational diversity is mirrored by spatial diversity: women occupied cells, beguinages, religious and domestic households, and *leprosaria*. While the number of *vitae* written about contemporary women

---

des Savants (1989), 61–103, at pp. 66–9.

[7] T. S. Miller, '"Love is a beguine": labelling lay religiosity in thirteenth-century Paris', in *Labels and Libels: Naming Beguines in Northern Medieval Europe*, ed. L. Böhringer, J. K. Deane and H. van Engen (Turnhout, 2014), pp. 135–50, at p. 135.

[8] E. Makowski, *'A Pernicious Sort of Woman': Quasi-Religious Women and Canon Lawyers in the Later Middle Ages* (Washington, D.C., 2005), p. x.

[9] P. D. Johnson, 'The cloistering of medieval nuns: release or repression, reality or fantasy', in *Gendered Domains: Rethinking Public and Private in Women's History. Essays from the Seventh Berkshire Conference on the History of Women*, ed. D. O. Helly and S. M. Reverby (Ithaca, N.Y., 1992), pp. 27–39, at p. 30.

[10] Alongside the six *vitae* cited previously are: *Vita Aleydis Scarembecanae*, *A.A.S.S.*, 11 June, II, pp. 471–7; *Vita Beatricis,* in *The Life of Beatrice of Nazareth*, ed. R. De Ganck (Kalamazoo, Mich., 1991), pp. 3–345; Thomas of Cantimpré, *Vita Christinae Mirabilis*, *A.A.S.S.*, 24 July, V, pp. 637–60; Philip de Clairvaux, 'Vita Elisabeth sanctimonialis in Erkenrode, Ordinis Cisterciensis, Leodiensis diœ cesis', in *Catalogus Codicum Hagiographicorum Bibliotheca Regiae Bruxellensis* (Brussels, 1886), i. 362–78; Thomas of Cantimpré, *Vita Lutgardis Aquiriensis*, *A.A.S.S.*, 16 June, III, pp. 231–63; Thomas of Cantimpré, 'Vita Margaretae de Ypris' and 'Les Frères Prècheurs et le movement dévot en Flandres au XIIIe siècle', *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum*, xviii (1949), 106–30 and 'Vita Odiliae viduae Leodiensis', *Analecta Bollandiana*, xiii (1894), 197–287. I have excluded from this list contemporary women who were recorded in a post 13th-century *vita*.

was a marked increase from the preceding centuries, there was not the same surge in hagiographical writing about men. The memoralization of holy men was constant and at no point did the quantity of *vitae* written about women surpass those dedicated to men. The men celebrated in thirteenth-century *vitae* include abbots, monks, *conversi*, penitent knights and hermits. The men tended to be monastic, with the Cistercian abbey of Villers, situated in the duchy of Brabant, particularly dominant.

The surging interest in contemporary women as hagiographical subjects was bolstered by the localization of the women's cults. Manuscript transmission suggests that small communities of local devout collated and circulated the *vitae*. For example, a seventeenth-century catalogue reveals that the abbey of Sint-Truiden, a hub for local religious, had held versions of the *vitae* of Marie d'Oignies, Juetta of Huy, Ida of Nivelles, and Ida of Léau.[11] The Cistercian nunneries of La Cambre and La Ramée each held late thirteenth-century manuscripts that contained the *vitae* of Ida of Nivelles and Ida of Léau.[12] Anneke B. Mulder-Bakker has suggested that the Low Countries' *mulieres religiosae* provided examples of sanctity to a broad spectrum of women. Mulder-Bakker overstated the textual reach of the *vitae*, but there are certainly didactic *exempla* within the texts. Women's behaviour at thresholds provide some of the more ordinary examples of sanctity for women who frequently behaved in extraordinary ways. If the textual accounts of women at windows and doors were instructional, then this indicates that these were spaces in which women were expected to operate. This is significant when considering the existing paradigm of the window as a dangerous threshold.

According to Peter Stallybrass's oft-cited observation, the surveillance of women concentrated on their chastity, the mouth and the threshold of the house.[13] The three categories merge through their connection to enclosure. Michael Camille compared Stallybrass's feminization of thresholds and interiors with the unexplored masculine street. Camille suggested that the connection between streets, commerce and masculinity produced a 'network of phallic significations'.[14] Locating the domestic with the feminine/

---

[11] A. B. Mulder-Bakker, 'Holy laywomen and their biographers in the thirteenth century', in *Living Saints of the Thirteenth Century: the Lives of Yvette, Anchoress of Huy; Juliana of Cornillon, Author of the Corpus Christi Feast; and Margaret the Lame, Anchoress of Magdeburg*, ed. A .B. Mulder-Bakker (Turnhout, 2011), pp. 1–42, at p. 39.

[12] Bibliothèque royale, MS. 8609–20, fo. 146–78, MS. 8895–96, fo. 35v and fos. 29–44.

[13] P. Stallybrass, cited in M. Camille, 'Signs of the city: place, power, and public fantasy in medieval Paris', in *Medieval Practices of Space*, ed. B. A. Hanawalt and M. Kobialka (Minneapolis, Minn., 2000), pp. 1–36, at p. 27.

[14] Camille, 'Signs of the city', p. 27.

intimate and the street with the masculine/economic is unsustainable in the medieval context. However, placement of the saint at the threshold of the window is exclusive to women in the *vitae*. In a wider investigation of nine *vitae* of men from the thirteenth-century Low Countries, the *fenestra* is mentioned solely in the *vita Arnulfi*, when an unnamed cleric visited the window of a local recluse.[15] Arnulf himself is absent from the account.[16] The *fenestra* is mentioned in eight of the thirteen *vitae* dedicated to women and in detail in the *Vita Iulianae*, the *Vita Ivettae*, the *Vita Idae Nivellis*, and the *Vita Idae Lewensis*.

Examples of the window as a dangerous space for women can be found in thirteenth-century literary texts. According to some medieval commentators, the unprotected window was a potential site for illicit contact between women and men. Visibility, both solicited and unsolicited, marked the window's sensual potential. In the *Roman de la Rose*, Jean de Meun insinuated that women frequently welcomed men into their chambers through their window.[17] Diane Wolfthal highlighted that in illustrated books for a Jewish audience the window was also regarded as a space where women could meet men surreptitiously.[18] Alongside its functional purposes the *mashrabiya*, a wooden screen with intricate latticing, allowed Muslim women to look outside of the window without being seen. The presence of women, particularly young women, at the window could indicate sexual availability. Women were lusted after or lustful and the window was a boundary that could be penetrated both physically and visually.

In Christian imagery, men tended to hold possession of the gaze when positioned at the window. Renditions of the biblical narrative of King David, who spotted the bathing Bathsheba from his palace window, filtered into medieval conceptualizations of the yearning male gaze. In '*The Knight's Tale*', Palamon and Arcite made Emelye the object, as opposed to the subject, of their desire when they looked at her from the tower window.[19] Wolfthal cited Gregory the Great's second *Book of Dialogues*, which described how a bitter monk named Florentius instructed seven women to dance naked inside the monastery grounds in an attempt to seduce St. Benedict's followers. In later medieval imaginings, the naked women could be seen through the windows of the monk's cell.[20] The women were bait; a passive spectacle to the monk's active, albeit conflicted, gaze.

---

[15] Alongside the two *vitae* already cited are: Goswin of Bossut, *Vita Abundi*, in 'De Vita Abundus Van Hoei', ed. A. M. Frenken, *Cîteaux*, x (1959), 5–33; *Vita Caroli VIII Villariensi Abbate*, *A.A.S.S.*, 29 Jan., II, 976–80; *Vita Gerlaci Eremita in Belgio*, *A.A.S.S.*, 5 Jan., I, pp. 304–19; Thomas of Villers, 'De Venerabili Viro Godefrido Pachomio', *Analecta Bollandiana*, xiv (1895), 263–8; *Vita Godefridi sacrista*, *A.A.S.S.*, 1 Oct., i, 531–7; Thomas of Cantimpré, 'Vita Ioannis Cantipratensis', ed. R. Godding, *Revue d'histoire écclesiastique*, lxxvi (1981), 257–316; *Vita Nicolae Fratre Converso*, *A.A.S.S.*, 9 Nov., IV, 277–9 and *Vita Walterus de Birbaco*, *A.A.S.S.*, 22 Jan., II, 447–50.

[16] *Vita Arnulfi*, p. 623.

[17] Jean de Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*, ed. F. Horgan (Oxford, 1994), p. 193.

[18] D. Wolfthal, 'The woman in the window: licit and illicit sexual desire in Renaissance Italy', in *Sex Acts in Early Modern Italy: Practice, Performance, Perversion, Punishment*, ed. A. Levy (Farnham, 2010), pp. 57–75, at p. 113.

Wolfthal's analysis of the medieval window was guided by her identification of two gendered characteristics: transgression and chastity. Chastity is stressed in didactic material for religious women. *Institutiones* formulated for Dominican nuns in the thirteenth century shaped religious rituals in order to uphold physical and mental enclosure. Instructions for speaking at the window were specified, as illicit conversations between nuns and outsiders could threaten enclosure.[21] Windows were to be fastened with a grill and did not allow for sight. Likewise, the author of the thirteenth-century *Ancrene Wisse* encouraged women to love their windows as little as possible. Recluses were told that windows should be small, fastened and covered with a black cloth. The recluse's physical enclosure and enclosure of the heart was entwined.[22] Permeating thresholds could be a mental as well as bodily act, so both body and cell should be impenetrable.

Indicated in the *Ancrene Wisse* is the connection between sight and enclosure. Anchoritic literature has provided one of the most ample sources for scholars interested in Christian enclosure and vision. Michelle M. Sauer noted how the dissemination of scientific texts from the Arabic world facilitated optic studies in the thirteenth-century Christian west.[23] Sight, as both an act and sense, was dictated by contemporary moral and social codes. Sauer cited Roger Bacon's thirteenth-century *Opus majus*, which drew on the Aristotelian concept of vision in order to stress that active vision was connected to the embodied soul. According to Roger, the eye passed over visible objects and contained the objects. In the Low Countries' *vitae*, only the recluses are described as being able to look out of their windows. For example, Marie d'Oignies was able to see the altar from the window in her cell. In her analysis of the English anchoritic window, Sauer suggested that, as sight was connected to sexuality, the recluse's window was designed to look upon sacred space in order to purify the anchoritic gaze.[24] The cruciform squint was thus a mechanism of control and a common architectural feature.

---

[19] Chaucer, 'The Knight's Tale', in *The Canterbury Tales: Nine Tales and the General Prologue: Authoritative Text, Sources and Backgrounds, Criticisms*, ed. V. A. Kolve and G. Olson (New York, 1989), p. 29.

[20] Wolfthal, 'The woman in the window', p. 119.

[21] J. A. Smith, '*Clausura districta*: conceiving space and community for Dominican nuns in the thirteenth century', *Parergon*, xxvii (2010), 13–36, at p. 23.

[22] *Ancrene Wisse*, in *The Nun's Rule: Being the Ancren Riwle, Modernised by James Morton*, ed. J. Morton (1907), pp. 39–41.

[23] M. M. Sauer, 'Architecture of desire: mediating the female gaze in the medieval English anchorhold', *Gender & History*, xxv (2013), 545–64, at p. 548.

As the window had the potential to be a visually erotic space, examples of the *mulieres religiosae* being seen through their window are scarce. Such incidences tend to be brief and generic. For example, the biographer of the *Vita Idae Lewensis* remarked that God looked upon Ida through her window. The anecdote does not have an architectural basis, instead evoking the image of God peering into Ida's soul. There is just one case, in the *vita Iulianae*, when the corporeal form of the saint was clearly visible to the outside eye. Juliana (d. 1258) spent the majority of her religious life at Mont-Cornillon, a double monastery built on the foundations of a *leprosarium*. During her time as prioress, Juliana had enforced a stricter regimen and supported the monastery's adoption of the Augustinian Rule in 1242. However, a hostile and simoniac prior, alongside the burghers of Liège, sought to ensure that the community remained a lay institution. Juliana was forced to flee Mont-Cornillon and sought sanctuary in the cell of her close friend Eve of Saint-Martin. Eve warned Juliana that she should cover herself with a black veil, lest the prior's followers 'caught sight' of her through the cell's window.[25] Eve advised Juliana to cover her head not out of concern for her friend's chastity, but because the prior's supporters were violent. Juliana refused, telling Eve that she was unwilling to hide her true self from her detractors.

Juliana's act of defiance is exceptional in the *vitae*, but not unique in its wider hagiographic context. Comparisons can be made with late-medieval depictions of the popular virgin martyr St. Margaret of Antioch. In illuminated miniatures, Margaret was often positioned at the barred window of her prison cell.[26] While Margaret fought her pagan enemies and the devil in the guise of a dragon, Juliana was embroiled in a conflict against lay powers that asserted control over the temporal affairs of Mont-Cornillon. Both women were public in battle, but were conduits of a cause greater than their own.

More commonly in the Low Countries' *vitae*, the window provided women with a space for intercession. This occurred when the women had reached a point of spiritual maturity. The first example comes from the *vita Ivettae*. Juetta of Huy (d. 1228) had an eventful life. She was married at fifteen; bore three children; was widowed at eighteen; left her father's household to live with lepers, and eventually became a recluse in a cell attached to the church that served the *leprosarium*. Despite the rhetoric that sealed and concealed their bodies, recluses had a palpable presence within their communities. Such was Juetta's influence that Georges Duby, drawing on the gendered stereotype of women as spiders, equated Juliana's cell with the centre of a web.[27] Juetta's biographer Hugh of Floreffe stated that, as Juetta could read people's secrets through their eyes, sinners avoided her gaze.[28] Hugh should not be taken literally. Juetta was aided by the gift of prophecy and her mind's eye allowed her to penetrate the souls around her. When Juetta believed that someone near to her had sinned, she requested that the individual was brought to her window. For example, Juetta received knowledge that a priest-sacristan had seduced a woman while in the church. When Juetta revealed to the priest what she knew, he was incredulous that she could know the precise details of his liaison.[29] On another occasion Juetta summoned a powerful dean to her window and chastised him for his usurious practices.[30] Both the priest-sacristan and the dean refused to admit their guilt and died soon after Juetta had admonished them. There is no suggestion in the *vita* that these visits were regulated. Juetta appears to have enjoyed relative physical and emotional freedom before and after her ceremonious enclosure in 1191.

---

[24] Sauer, 'Architecture of desire', p. 548.

[25] '*ab intuentibus*'. *Vita Julianae,* p. 472.

[26] E.g., the illuminated miniature in the Book of Hours and Psalter, southern Netherlands, *c.*1460–70, British Library, Harley MS. 3000, fo. 42v, <http://blogs.bl.uk/digitisedmanuscripts/2014/07/enter-the-dragon-happy-st-margarets-day.html> [accessed 1 Oct. 2017].

Similarities can be drawn with Ida of Nivelles (d. 1231). Ida began her religious career as a beguine, before moving to the Cistercian monastery of Nivelles when she was sixteen years old. Goswin of Bossut, the presumed author of her *vita*, explained that while Ida was in church it was revealed to her in a vision that a man of her acquaintance had committed incest. Ida demanded that the man was brought to the parlour window. At the window, Ida chastised the man and encouraged him to repent. Ida's intercession was more successful than Juetta's. According to Goswin, Ida's 'words' pierced the man's heart like a sword, the physical impact of which caused tears to stream from his eyes.[31] As with the *vita Ivettae*, there is no indication that Ida and the man were able to see each other and Goswin offers no information about the window's materiality.

---

[27] G. Duby, cited in A. B. Mulder-Bakker, 'The life of Yvette, anchoress of Huy, by Hugh of Floreffe', in *Living Saints of the Thirteenth Century: the Lives of Yvette, Anchoress of Huy; Juliana of Cornillon, Author of the Corpus Christi Feast; and Margaret the Lame, Anchoress of Magdeburg*, ed. A. B. Mulder-Bakker (Turnhout, 2011), pp. 49–66, at p. 60.

[28] *Vita Ivettae*, p. 879.

[29] '*aptior secretiorue*' (*Vita Ivettae*, p. 878).

[30] *Vita Ivettae*, p. 879.

[31] '*verbum ille*' (*Vita Idae*, p. 229).

The window was not just a space that allowed *mulieres religiosae* to chastise men's transgressions. It was also a point for edification. The *vita Idea Lewensis* describes the life of the Cistercian nun Ida of Léau (d. *c.*1265). Ida's anonymous biographer described how Ida became physically inebriated while she gazed at the *ciborium* in the chapel of La Ramée. Ida was interrupted when a fellow sister signed to her that she was needed at the guest window. Still in a state of inebriation, Ida sat in silence at the window for some time, before she 'spoke' some spiritually nourishing words to her visitor.[32] The sex of Ida's visitor is unclear: her biographer simply refers to the 'neighbour's peace', indicating the guest's close proximity to Ida and the enriching result of this closeness.[33]

The physical visibility of Juetta, Ida of Nivelles and Ida of Léau is not clear in the cited examples. While it seems likely that the window hid the corporeal shape of the women, speech and silence afforded the women visibility. Sensory perception in medieval Europe was not just the transmission of data, but perceptions which enabled spiritual and 'intangible qualities'.[34] Speech, which acted as a link between the soul and external body, can be included in the range of senses. In Augustine's *Confessions*, Augustine differentiated between the eternal divine word and temporal human speech.[35] Jeffrey Hamburger has highlighted that sensorial perceptions of the divine not only made complex ideas accessible, but also endowed such claims with authenticity.[36] Just as the eye could both penetrate and be penetrated, so too could sinful words contaminate the speaker and listener. Sermons and pastoral tracts on virtues and vices that listed 'sins of the tongue' grew in popularity during the thirteenth century. Sinful speech was associated particularly with women: images of gossiping women with devils perched on their shoulders were depicted in church wall paintings.[37]

Building on the work of Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault, Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life* identified the 'strategies' and 'tactics' practised by the subordinate and weak in order to subvert dominant powers. As part of his framework, de Certeau has suggested that place and spaces are essentially different things. To de Certeau, a place has a sense of stability. It has 'proper rules' and what de Certeau described as an 'instantaneous configuration of positions'.[38] In contrast, a space is composed of 'intersections of mobile elements' and is created or produced by movement from one place to another.[39] The women's speech at the window can be interpreted as movement. The window provided a channel between the sacred inner and outside space. Contrary to the paradigm of the window as a dangerous threshold, the sinful behaviour of the men did not permeate the window. After hearing of the men's sexual transgressions, Juetta and Ida were able to correct them without endangering their own chastity. The women maintained control of the 'vocal gaze' and the window provided the women with a space to display their spiritual maturity and authority. The window's 'two orientations' is displayed most clearly when the window was used as a space for edification. Both Ida of Nivelles and Ida of Léau were in the church prior to meeting their guests. In Ida of Léau's case, her physical inebriation moved from the church to the window, from mouth to ear, and had a transcendental effect on her listener. Likewise, Ida of Nivelles' words moved through the window and penetrated her listener's heart. When speech is viewed as a form of spatial movement, the rules for active and passive enclosure are far more malleable.

---

[32] '*locuta est*' (*Vita Idae*, p. 229).

[33] '*paceque proximi*' (*Vita Idae*, p. 114).

[34] C. M. Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England* (New Haven, Conn., 2006), p. 1.

[35] Augustine, cited in Woolgar, *Senses in Late Medieval England*, p. 17.

[36] J. F. Hamburger, 'Mysticism and visuality', in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism*, ed. A. Hollywood and P. Z. Beckman (Cambridge, 2012), pp. 277–93, at p. 277.

[37] Woolgar, *Senses in Late Medieval England*, p. 98.

Unlike the window, doors are ubiquitous in the Low Countries' *vitae*. This pervasiveness can be attributed to the door's usage: communicating at the window was not necessarily a regular occurrence, while walking through doors was a daily action for any saint who was not enclosed in a cell. In the *vitae*, there are a number of brief anecdotes relating to knocking, standing, waiting or moving through doors. Literature pertaining to the carnal dangers of standing or communicating at doorways is more unusual. In three *vitae* dedicated to women, doors were a centerpiece for charity and penance. In the male *vitae*, the door is replaced with the monastery gate. While spiritual maturity is displayed at the window, saintly interactions at doors and gates are indicative of the earlier, active stage of a saint's spiritual life.

In the *vitae* of *mulieres religiosae*, the domestic household was often presented as a space in which the saint performed acts of charity as a means to differentiate themselves from the worldly identity of their kin. This was an important distinction for those saints who still remained in the world. Ida of Louvain (d. *c.*1275) was the daughter of a wealthy wine merchant. Ida occupied a single chamber (*camera*) in the domestic household before entering the Cistercian convent of Roosendaal in adulthood. In the first half of the *vita*, Ida's anonymous biographer describes numerous occasions in which Ida corrected her family's uncharitable practices. In one such incident, Ida's father had turned a pauper away from his house. Ida 'immediately stepped onto her father's doorway' and interceded on the pauper's behalf.[40] The door served as a platform for Ida's public intercession. Juetta also used the domestic household as a base for active charity. Following the death of her husband, Juetta stripped her household of its possessions and gave them to the poor. According to Hugh, Juetta 'opened her door to the wayfarer, receiving guests and pilgrims with hospitality'.[41]

---

[38] M. de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life,* ed. S. Rendall (1984), p. 117.

[39] de Certeau, *Practice of Everyday Life*, p. 117.

An opposing example is offered in the *Vita Mariae*. Jacques de Vitry wrote the *vita* in 1213, soon after Marie's death. The author of the liturgical office for Marie's feast day attributed Marie with founding 'the new religious life of [God's] beguines'.[42] The *vita* runs somewhat contrary to Marie's designation as beguine foundress and, instead, Jacques stressed Marie's contemplative withdrawal at Oignies. In one of the rare discussions of Marie's active charity, Jacques described how Marie wished to follow Christ by begging from door to door. However, Marie was unable to fulfil her apostolic desires. Jacques explained that not only would Marie's companions have found her absence intolerable but, more seriously, Marie could only do 'what was permitted for her to do'.[43] As Jacques used the familiar image of following the naked Christ, his description was probably figurative. However, it is curious that while Ida and Juetta were placed in an interior position at the boundary of a geometric place, the doors in the *vita Mariae* lacked the same stability. Unlike Francis of Assisi, whose public shedding of his mercantile wealth provides one of the most arresting images of thirteenth-century apostolicism, Marie's exterior positioning was untenable. Jacques inadvertently indicates the limitations of female movement.

The gate is mentioned in the *vitae* in relation to the monastery or heavenly gate and the lengthiest descriptions occur in the *vitae* of men. Gobert d'Aspremont (d. 1263), nephew of the count of Flanders, is described as first exercising his ascetic rigour in the secular world, after joining Frederick II's crusade in 1228.[44] His anonymous biographer describes how Gobert was keen to protect the poor, women and orphans while he journeyed to the Holy Land.[45] Gobert continued his charitable feats once he had joined the Cistercian community at Villers. His biographer explained that Gobert would walk to the busy west gate in order to distribute food and clothing to the outside community. In one instance Gobert met a poor beguine at the gate and gifted her with some shoes.[46] The *Exordium Cistercii* stated that women were not allowed to be lodged within the grange or to enter the monastery gate.[47] Such caution is not evident in Gobert's *vita* and it would not have been lost on the text's audience that Gobert's charity occurred in one of the more public areas of the monastic ground. Charitable giving at the gate supports the growing body of work that has highlighted the significant bonds that formed between Cistercian abbeys and the wider *familia*.[48]

---

[40] '*surgensque protinus ad fores paternas accessit*' (*Vita Idae*, p. 167).

[41] '*deinde ostium suum aperuit viatori, peregrinos hospitio receipiendo et hospites*' (*Vita Ivettae*, p. 869).

[42] '*novae religionis benignarum suarum*'. *Officium Mariae Oigniacensis*, in 'Office liturgique neumé de la Bienheureuse Marie d'Oignies à l'abbaye de Villers au XIII^e^ siècle', *Revue bénédictine*, cxi, ed. D. Misonne (2001), 282.

[43] '*fecit ergo quod potuit*' (*Vita Mariae*, p. 649).

[44] *Vita Goberti*, pp. 380–1.

Gobert's example can be compared with the *vita Arnulfi*. Arnulf (d. 1231) joined Villers as a *conversus* following a wanton adolescence. Goswin, the biographer of the *vita*, described how the abbot of Villers was forced to punish Arnulf after the community at Villers discovered his covert almsgiving. Goswin stated that the abbot instructed that Arnulf should stand at the monastery gate like an outcast.[49] Lodged in a cell at the gate, Arnulf bore his punishment in the 'view of all' and expressed gladness that he, like St. Peter, was a gatekeeper.[50] Megan Cassidy-Welsh noted that a consistent feature of Cistercian punishment was its public nature. In confessions made in private, subjects for correction were often wrongful thoughts and were typically dealt with by extra liturgical responsibilities. Accusations made in the chapter house were more likely to concern the breaking of institutional rules and were immediately public.[51] Punishment focused on the correction of the body, through fasting or the removal of the body from certain areas of the abbey. In a plan of the architecture of Villers, Thomas Coomans recorded a pair of prison cells in close proximity to the main gate.[52] If Arnulf was placed at this location, he was at a distance from the south and west gates of the abbey. While Gobert used these busy gates for his charitable giving, the 'all' who were able to see Arnulf were most likely his brethren. Arnulf's punishment at the gate offered a visual display of penance and humility, while his association with St. Peter linked Villers abbey with heaven. Arnulf's example was textual: such punishment offered an example but was not to be imitated.

---

[45] *Vita Goberti*, p. 381.

[46] *Vita Goberti*, p. 390.

[47] *Exordium Cistercii*, *Capitula*, xviii, in *Narrative and Legislative Texts from Early Cîteaux: Latin Text in Dual Edition with English Translation and Notes*, ed. C. Waddell (Nuits-Saint-Georges, 1999), p. 411.

[48] See E. Jamroziak, 'Spaces of lay-religious interaction in Cistercian houses of northern Europe', *Parergon*, xxvii (2010), 37–58.

[49] *Vita Arnulfi*, p. 618.

[50] *'in conspectu omnium'*. *Vita Arnulfi*, p. 618.

[51] M. Cassidy-Welch, *Monastic Spaces and their Meanings: Thirteenth-Century English Cistercian Monasteries* (Turnhout, 2001), p. 120.

[52] T. Coomans, *L'abbaye de Villers-en-Brabant: construction, configuration et signification d'une abbaye cistercienne gothique* (Brussels, 2000), p. 155.

In the introduction to this chapter, the three overriding aims of an examination of windows, doors, and gates in *vitae* from the thirteenth-century Low Countries were outlined. The first was to examine the gendering of thresholds; the second was to note the relationship between the senses and space; and the third was to offer an alternative to the paradigm of the window as a dangerous threshold. In this chapter's conclusion, the three aims prove difficult to separate: the relationship between gender, space, and agency are not mutually exclusive in the *vitae*. At the door and gate, the women and men served Christ with their bodies. While scholarship has focused on women's monastic status (or lack of), it is the male saints who were governed most obviously by their religious affiliation. The monastery gate provided a space for active service and the abbey of Villers was subsequently connected to the heavenly realm. At the door, the *mulieres religiosae* were visible through their corporeal action; their active charity differentiated them from the worldly interior of the domestic household. On the contrary, the *mulieres religiosae* were intimately connected to the threshold of the window. At the window, Juetta, Ida of Nivelles, and Ida of Léau displayed spiritual authority. The *mulieres religiosae* were in control of the window's two orientations as, while the porousness of the window extended outwards, it did not appear to have filtered back through. Bestowed with divine foresight, the women translated their holiness through speech. Although their communication at the window concentrated on the area of the mouth and enclosure, it was this sensory action that made the women visible, within and outside of the text.

14. Women in the medieval wall paintings of Canterbury cathedral

Jayne Wackett

Medieval Canterbury cathedral housed a Benedictine monastery, and was therefore essentially a male community. However, the role of the cathedral as a pilgrim centre and, at times, a parish church means that as a space it was, in part, open to women.

Women were present in the art of the cathedral as tomb effigies, in stained glass, statues and carved bosses. However, even with the briefest inspection of the images in these various media, it is easy to ascertain that the ratio of men to women represented is heavily weighted in favour of the former, with women very much in the minority. For example, of the forty-three medieval monuments noted on the plan of the nave and the eastern end of Canterbury cathedral, only three are of women.[1] Additionally, these three women only appear on joint tombs with their husbands.[2] Looking at the medieval stained glass of the Becket Miracle Windows, taking number IV, Trinity Chapel Ambulatory as an arbitrary example, there are forty-two men and seventeen women.[3]

It could be argued that the reason why women are shown in such a marked minority in Canterbury cathedral is because it was essentially a male space as a Benedictine house. However, the Miracle Windows were in an area open to the general populace and tell of St. Thomas Becket's interactions with ordinary people, not clerics. It might also be argued that the lower representation of women within the cathedral's walls is possibly a general reflection of the perceived status of medieval women. In her book *Medieval Women,* Eileen Power stated that the position of women in the

---

[1] C. Wilson, 'The medieval monuments', in *A History of Canterbury Cathedral*, ed. P. Collinson, N. Ramsay and M. Sparks (Canterbury, 2002), pp. 451–510, at pp. 454–5.

[2] Lady Joan Brenchley with her husband Sir William; Queen Joan with King Henry IV; and Lady Margaret Holland with both her first and second husbands, John Beaufort, earl of Somerset and Thomas, duke of Clarence.

[3] Reproduction in M. Michael, *Stained Glass of Canterbury Cathedral* (New York, 2004), p. 103.

J. Wackett, 'Women in the medieval wall paintings of Canterbury cathedral', in *Gender in medieval places, spaces and thresholds*, ed. V. Blud, D. Heath and E. Klafter (2018), pp. 219–36.

middle ages was an amalgam of three standpoints: theoretical, legal and every day.[4] She also posited that essentially each of these three standpoints was decided and controlled by two main groups of men: clerics and the knightly class.

Building on this foundation but with a nuanced slant, this chapter explores the concept that women appear in the minority in Canterbury cathedral's art because they were principally regarded in relation to men, as opposed to in their own right. This idea will be examined through the medium of wall paintings using the research data gathered in Arts and Humanities Research Council-funded research in Canterbury cathedral, which specifically examined Gothic wall paintings.[5]

In relation to the wall paintings, guiding questions will be: how often do women appear? What types of women are in the paintings? In what capacity are they represented? Does where women figure on walls depend on whether the space was used by the monks or cathedral visitors? These questions will form the basis of discussion as each of the paintings is considered.

Saintly mothers: Gabriel's chapel

Perhaps the best-known wall paintings at Canterbury are the mid twelfth-century murals in the apse of St. Gabriel's chapel, located on the south-eastern side of the western crypt.[6] The murals on the chapel's eastern walls include seraphim on wheels, a central figure of Christ, Zacharias being struck dumb (Luke I: 20: the upper part of the head of Zacharias is missing but he is clearly pointing to his mouth to indicate that he cannot speak) and the naming of John the Baptist (Luke I: 57–80). The red pigment is particularly well-preserved and discussion on style includes disputed reference to Byzantine influence and possible Italian artists.[7] In 1879, an article in the *Kentish Gazette* reported how the murals were removed with mortar attached and then repinned to the wall using copper dowels and wet

---

[4] E. Power, *Medieval Women,* ed. M. Postan (Cambridge, 1975), pp. 9–11.

[5] Gothic Colour at Canterbury Cathedral, 2016: principal investigator, E. Guerry, University of Kent.

[6] J. Dart *History and Antiquities of the Cathedral Church of Canterbury* (1726), p. 34; 'Interesting mural paintings in the cathedral crypt', *Kentish Gazette* CCL H/Os–6 (1) (25 March 1879); E. W. Tristram, *The paintings of Canterbury cathedral* (Canterbury Papers, vi, 1935), pp. 1–12, at pp. 2–7; T. S. R. Boase, *English Art 1100–1216* (1953), p. 53; M. Rickert, *Painting in Britain: the Middle Ages* (Middlesex, 1954), pp. 88–9; K. Flynn, 'Romanesque wall paintings in the cathedral church of Christ Church, Canterbury', *Archaeol. Cant.*, xcv (1979), 185–95; H. Howard, *Pigments of English Medieval Wall Painting* (2003); R. Rosewell, *Medieval Wall Paintings in English and Welsh Churches* (Woodbridge, 2008), pp. 15, 72, 135.

[7] D. Kahn, 'The structural evidence for the dating of the St. Gabriel chapel wall paintings at Christ Church Cathedral, Canterbury', *The Burlington Magazine*, cxxvi (1984), 225–9.

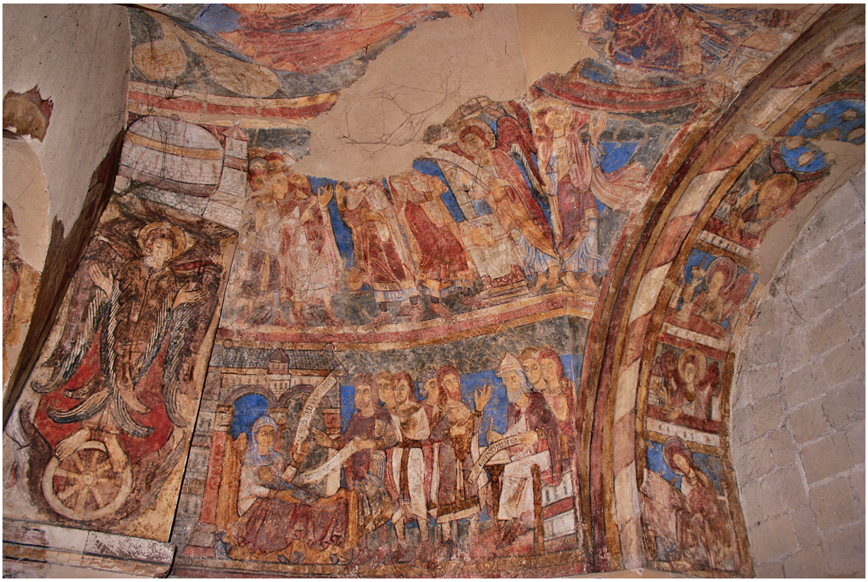


Figure 14.1. St. Gabriel's chapel, Canterbury cathedral. Wall painting depicting the naming of John the Baptist. St. Elizabeth semi-reclines on a bed. Photograph: Toby Huitson.

cement.[8] To all intents and purposes, the reason that these paintings survive at all and in relatively good condition is because they were walled up at the end of the twelfth century. This was an architectural measure adopted to strengthen the tower above the apse. A door was opened in the wall in 1879 and the entire wall was demolished in the 1950s; a major restoration took place in the 1990s.[9]

From the considerable remains of the chapel's painting scheme, which shows narrative crowd scenes and individual saints (such as the Evangelists on the underside of an arch), it is interesting to note that there is only one depiction of a woman. In the scene of the naming of John the Baptist, Elizabeth semi-reclines on a bed on the left while holding her infant son; Zacharias, John's father, is on the right, seated in his chair and writing on a scroll, as he has lost the power of speech (Figure 14.1). The moment is described in Luke I: 57–80:

> Now Elisabeth's full time came that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son. And her neighbours and her cousins heard how the Lord had

---

[8] 'Interesting mural paintings', *Kentish Gazette.*

[9] 'Wall paintings in Gabriel chapel', Canterbury Archaeology <http://www.canterbury-archaeology.org.uk/frescoes/4590809663> [accessed 23 Nov. 2017].

> shewed great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her. And it came to pass, that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they called him Zacharias, after the name of his father. And his mother answered and said, Not so; but he shall be called John. And they said unto her, There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name. And they made signs to his father, how he would have him called. And he asked for a writing table, and wrote, saying, His name is John. And they marvelled all. And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spake, and praised God.

The image in Gabriel's chapel has ten figures in all, and Elizabeth, as the only woman is therefore, perforce, surrounded by men, despite the fact that circumcisions and naming were also attended by female neighbours and family members. Although her sole representation of the female gender, arguably, has the effect of making her conspicuous and in some way magnifies her importance in the scene, it is equally arguable that the Gabriel chapel murals put into perspective the concept that women were shown in paintings when necessary to convey the narrative message but certainly not as ordinary background.

Elizabeth's role as represented in Gabriel's chapel is that of a saintly woman, in fact a saintly mother. Deconstructing this a little further, Elizabeth is a woman whose principle virtue comes from being the mother of a saint, John the Baptist. In essence she is a woman chosen by a male deity to bear a male child thanks to her husband. Thus, her role is defined by her relationship to men, as indeed, is her portrayal in the Canterbury cathedral murals.

Saintly mother: south-west transept

In extension of this last thought, the epitome of a good woman in medieval times was the Blessed Virgin Mary, the best-known saintly mother in the western world. Mary was deemed worthy of being shown in multiple representations in myriad media, often in the same location; in such a way, even a small medieval church might easily have tens of images of her as part of their fabric and liturgical accoutrements. For example, close to Canterbury is St. Mary's, Brook; this small church has a series of wall paintings recounting the life and death of the Virgin in ten roundels on the nave's south wall.[10] Typically most churches of all sizes would also have had a rood loft or painted tympanum with statues or representations of Mary, Jesus crucified and John the Evangelist, as well as windows of the Annunciation and/or the Jesse tree. Images of Mary would also have been found in liturgical books, on vestments, reliquaries, tombs and devotional jewellery. This list is non-exhaustive but gives an idea of how ubiquitous Mary's image was in relation to medieval culture.

---

[10] Rosewell, *Medieval Wall Paintings*, p. 261.

We cannot know with any certainty just how many wall paintings of the Blessed Virgin Mary there would have been in Canterbury cathedral. There is a whole painted chapel in the undercroft dedicated to Mary. Much of the paint remains, albeit in an altered state.[11] Following tradition, it is likely to have had a statue of the Virgin, but there is no record of whether there were paintings with her as subject matter.

Above the crypt, there are the remains of at least one wall painting of the Virgin still visible in Canterbury cathedral. Given its location and extremely poor condition, it is understandable that it has been overlooked; the subject matter and details of the extant remains are extremely difficult to discern. In the south-east transept, on the stretch of wall between the modern Bassanyi windows there are clearly visible remains of a large painted border (see Figure 14.2). The largest border is patterned with diamonds and from about a third of the way up the wall, clearly ascends thirteen masonry courses to the very top of the wall, where it joins the ceiling.[12] Rather than remains of pigment, the pattern is made through silhouettes or shadows of previous paint application.

As a starting point, it is logical to assume that the frame once surrounded a central image of roughly 3m by 4.5m. From the floor it is possible to distinguish certain lines, shadows and pigment stains inside the frame; this is best achieved when the sun is not shining through the Bassayni windows, which makes the viewer squint against the light.[13]

Looking at Figure 14.2, it is possible to make out the features marked on Figure 14.3. The space is divided vertically into two halves, with what appears to be a vase containing foliate shapes between two figures. The figure on the right is the easiest to decipher; it is a winged figure, facing left, with wings stretching to the right frame edge. The figure wears a long, fluid robe, the outline of which appears to denote a leg which is bent forward, suggestive of the figure being down on one knee. There is a clear sleeve with cuff and the outline of a hand, which is holding something that extends downwards.

On the left, starting one course of stones up from the bottom edge of the frame and going up a further two courses, is a piece of furniture, consisting of a tilted, round-bottomed, low 'desk' with short, shaped legs. Behind and above this, it is possible to make out robe outlines of the second figure.

---

[11] Howard, *Pigments*, p.103.

[12] There are also the remains of a different frame directly below this.

[13] These remains are best seen on an overcast day.

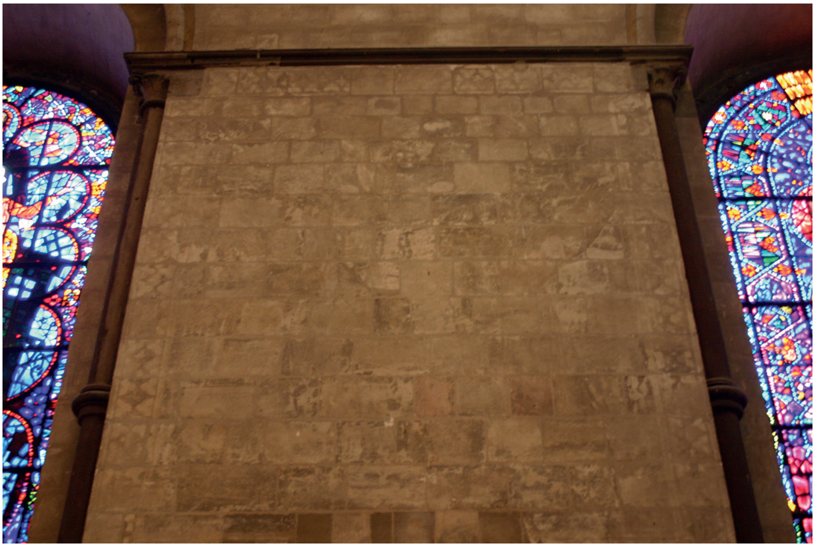


Figure 14.2. Remains of a wall painting border on south-east transept of Canterbury cathedral. Photograph: Toby Huitson.

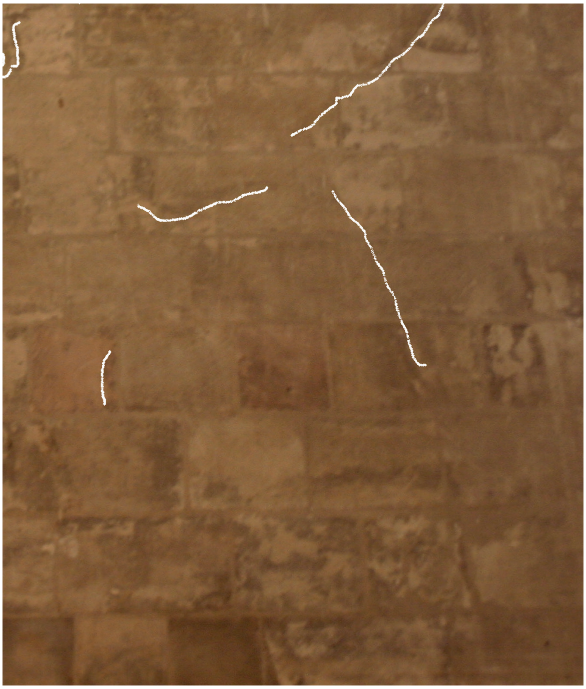


Figure 14.3. Outlined remains of a wall painting border on south-east transept of Canterbury cathedral. Photograph: Toby Huitson.

From these elements it appears that this is a monumentally large image of the Annunciation, when the angel Gabriel appears to Mary to reveal that she has been chosen by God to immaculately conceive Jesus Christ. The iconography connected to medieval Annunciation scenes has certain constants that revolve around Mary being interrupted at her devotions by Gabriel's appearance. More often than not, the scene, pre-Renaissance, takes place in an interior where the floor is often tiled, where Mary is shown either seated or kneeling at a prie-dieu or low reading desk with a devotional book upon it. From the thirteenth century onwards, there is usually a lily, as a symbol of Mary's purity. How the lily is shown can vary, but they are often shown held in Gabriel's hand or in a centrally placed vase between the two figures.[14] Predominantly, Gabriel is on the left of the scene, but there are numerous examples where this is not the case.[15] Inclusion of the dove of the Holy Spirit is common, as is a scroll in Gabriel's hands with various permutations and abbreviations of the phrase *Ave maria gratia plena, Dio tecum* ('Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you', Luke I: 28).

As can be deduced, many of these elements are either definitely or probably present in the Canterbury wall painting: prie-dieu, angel, central plant (lily?), and something in the angel's hand (scroll?). The apparent fluidity of the gown and stance of the winged figure, along with the shape of the low desk, which we may interpret as a prie-dieu or reading desk such as found in Da Vinci's Annunciation scene,[16] strongly suggest that this was a fifteenth-century painting of the international gothic style.

A second wall painting in Canterbury cathedral to include Mary has no visible physical remains and is only known from antiquarian accounts and archival documentation. Canterbury Cathedral Archives Additional MS. 1 is a sketch book with a selection of coloured images made by George Austin Senior, surveyor to the fabric (1819–48).[17] One of the images in this book is a colour sketch of Jesus as Man of Sorrows with Mary and John the Evangelist;

---

[14] E.g., Simone Martini, *Annunciation*, 1333, Uffizi Gallery, Florence.

[15] E.g., Book of Hours, France, Loire, *c.*1475 (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS. G.1.I).

[16] L. Da Vinci, *Annuniation,* 1475, oil on board, Uffizi Gallery, Florence.

[17] The book was presented to Canterbury Cathedral Archives by Mary Beatrice Austin and her sister Ethel Austin in 1928. It contains sketches predominantly by George Austin Senior with others by his son George Austin Junior, best known for his work on Canterbury cathedral's stained glass. Sketches include wall paintings in Canterbury cathedral and precincts destroyed in 19th-century restorations; stained glass; funerary urns; bosses in the cloisters; and stone coffins in the monastic cemetery. Notes in black script regarding the location of the paintings that appear on several of the sketches refer to Austin Senior in the third person; others have notes on colour in his own hand, noticeably those for the ambulatory ceiling vaults.

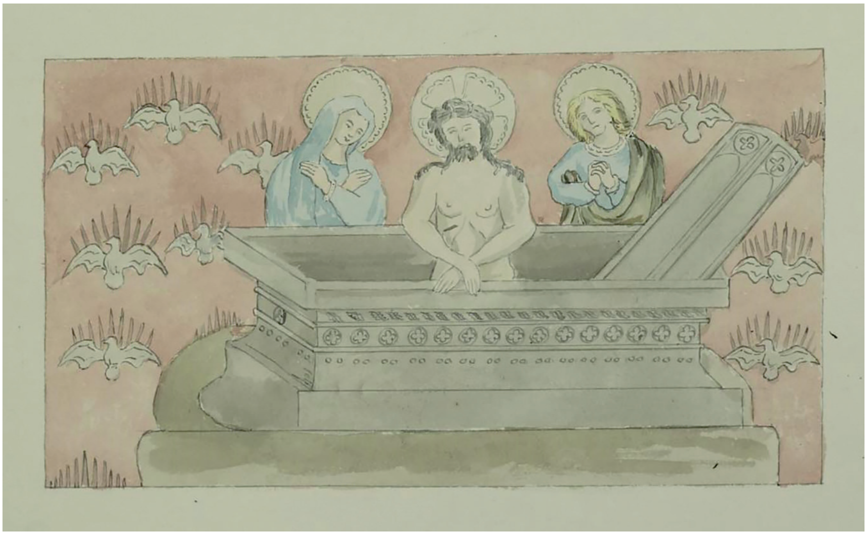


Figure 14.4. Man of Sorrows, George Austin's sketchbook, C.C.A.L. Add. MS. 1.

writing at the bottom of the sketch records it as being on the south-west side of the Corona chapel, behind where Temple's tomb, erected in 1902, now stands (Figure 14.4). The configuration of John and Mary on Jesus's left and right, respectively, reflects the traditional composition for crucifixion scenes, where Mary takes the role of *stabat mater*, the standing grieving mother.

Obviously, with such scant remains it is hard to build a proper picture of the extent and nature of Mary's portrayal on the walls of the medieval cathedral at Canterbury. The two images that we can use show her, like Elizabeth, accompanied by males (Gabriel, one of the four male archangels, John and Jesus) and in a role as mother: once at the point of conception and then as the grieving mother at her son's tomb.

Saintly reformed sinner: St. Mary Magdalene

Also in Austin's Sketchbook is a series of twelve saints and kings that were in the vaults of the north Trinity ambulatory. Madelaine Caviness wrote a brief, but informative, article on these, published in the 1997 *Antiquaries Journal*.[18] Austin Senior made rough colour sketches of the remains of the originals and noted their positions, and George Austin Junior later worked them into paintings.

---

[18] M. Caviness, 'A lost cycle of Canterbury paintings of 1220', *Antiquaries Jour.*, liv (1974), 60–74.

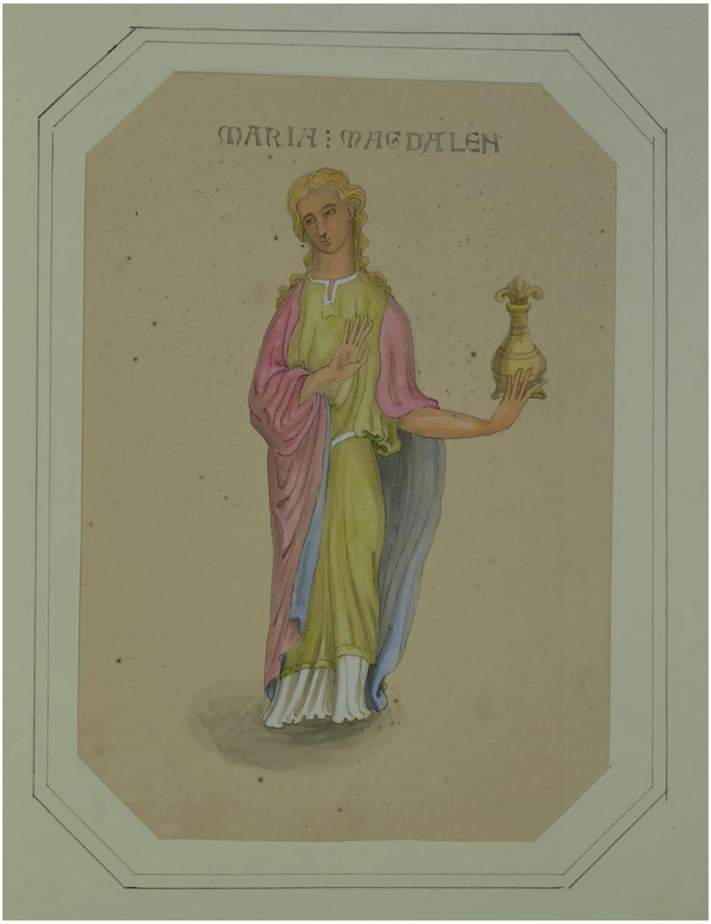


Figure 14.5. Mary Magdalene, George Austin's sketchbook, C.C.A.L. Add. MS. 1.

Using architectural clues, Caviness hypothesized that there may have been as many as seventy-two such paintings in the ambulatory that runs around the Trinity chapel.[19] However, as a certainty, of the known twelve, only one is of a woman, the repentant prostitute, Mary Magdalene, who is shown holding her identifying symbol of the vase of ointment (Figure 14.5). Working on this ratio, which is admittedly imperfect, there would be six women in the seventy-two images.

---

[19] Caviness, 'Lost cycle', p. 68.

From remaining vestiges of paint and antiquarian accounts it can be proven that there were wall paintings of saints around the triforium gallery in the Corona chapel. For example, in 1825, William Gostling noted of the Corona chapel that: 'Here also is a double triforium, and the wall answering the openings between the little pillars hath been painted with figures of saints at full length, with their names, now hardly distinguishable'.[20] Sadly no details of individual images or their gender remain.

Mary Magdalene was one of the major female saints, and it is probably in this role that she appears rather than in any overt nature as woman as sinner, although it should be recognized that this theme of once wanton woman was inextricably linked to her.

Wives

Although both Saints Mary and Elizabeth were wives, it is in their role as mothers to holy sons, Jesus and John the Baptist, that they have their importance. The next wall painting to be considered portrays a woman, not a saint herself, whose relevance is through being wife to a saint.

A wall painting from *c.*1480 of the legend of St. Eustace fills the final blind arch in the north choir wall adjacent to the north transept (Figure 14.6).[21] The image is in excellent condition, owing mainly to its being painted over with whitewash for centuries before being uncovered in 1830. In a continuous narrative composition, the legend, made popular by Jacobus de Voragine's *Golden Legend*, moves from the bottom to top with highly populated and colourful scenes which include the saint's conversion, trials and gruesome martyrdom.[22]

Eustace's wife (Theopista) and two sons, appear in this because they are characters in the saint's story according to Voragine, and are therefore necessary to carry the plot forward. Eustace was miraculously converted while out hunting; he had a vision of a crucifix between a stag's antlers and received a spoken message from Christ. On recounting this to Theopista, she informed him that she too had had a vision of Christ who foretold her husband's conversion. Events meant that the family had to flee into Egypt, in emulation of the Holy Family's flight. On their journey, Theopista was forcibly held captive by a lustful ship's captain and the whole family became individually separated one at a time and remained so for more than fifteen years. Eventually

---

[20] W. Gostling, *A Walk in and About the City of Canterbury* (Dover, 1825), p. 272.

[21] St. Eustace, style and dating, is discussed in Tristram, *Paintings of Canterbury Cathedral*, p. 11; C. E. Keyser, 'The mural and decorative paintings which are now existing, or which have been in existence, during the present century at Canterbury cathedral', *Archaeol. Jour.*, xxxv (1878), 275–88, at pp. 280–1.

[22] J. de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, trans. C. Stace (1998), pp. 236–42.

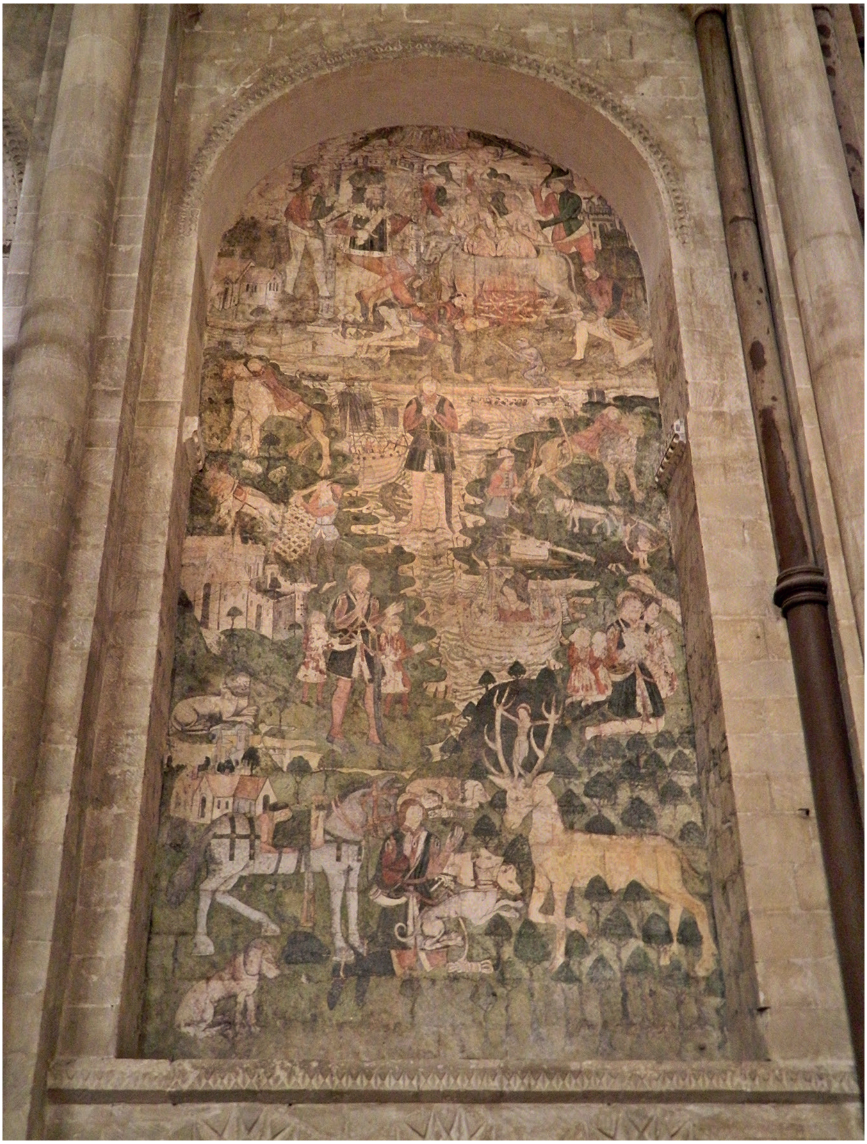


Figure 14.6. Wall painting, *c.*1480, of the legend of St. Eustace on north choir wall, Canterbury cathedral. Photograph: Toby Huitson.

they were all joyfully reunited, Theopista undefiled. However, their earthly joy was somewhat brief as they were all roasted to death in a large brazen bull placed over a fire at the behest of the pagan emperor Hadrian.

In the Canterbury painting, the wife appears four times: praying with the whole family after Eustace's conversion, being carried away in the ship, united again with the whole family in the martyrdom scene and lifted to heaven in Abraham's napkin with the whole family by angels. The sons also appear four times apiece, while Eustace is shown six times. One occurrence of Eustace shows him imposingly tall and placed alone vertically central; the manner of the aspect of this composition technique ensures that this is where the eye first comes to rest when viewing the image as a whole.

Very commonly, images of St. Eustace are of a single scene, showing him encountering the miraculous stag.[23] In the large space at Canterbury, the intention is of narrative rather than monumental representation, hence the part that the wife and sons play. Theopista is shown in a supporting role and knowledge of the story means that she fares well as an example of a virtuous wife, both undergoing her own trials on her husband's account and suffering stoically with him.

Even so, it is worth noting that although numerous other characters such as villagers, sailors and soldiers are shown extra to the family, including no fewer than eight in the martyrdom scene, Theopista is the only woman shown at any point in all of the image's stages. She is required as a plot vehicle, but other women were not perceived as necessary in any way to the story, despite the mention of Hadrian's wife in the Voragine tale and the fact that the boys were brought up (presumably with surrogate mothers) by villagers. This virtuous woman was on show to the general populace and, therefore, an example to those who saw her.

St. George

The final known example of a woman in a wall painting at Canterbury cathedral is a classic chivalric stereotype of a damsel in distress, a woman who needs a man to rescue her; but it is also connected to saints and is a representation of St. George defeating the dragon (Figure 14.7). As with the image of the Man of Sorrows, we know the visual details of this image thanks to the Austin sketchbook.[24] It is also mentioned by E. Brayley in an antiquarian account, but with no details beyond its subject matter, or failing condition.[25]

---

[23] E.g., A. Pisanello, *The Vision of St. Eustace,* oil on canvas, 1438–42, National Gallery, London.

[24] The image of St. George was above the Man of Sorrows.

[25] E. Brayley, *The Beauties of England and Wales* (18 vols. in 25, 1808), vii. 850; S. Robertson,

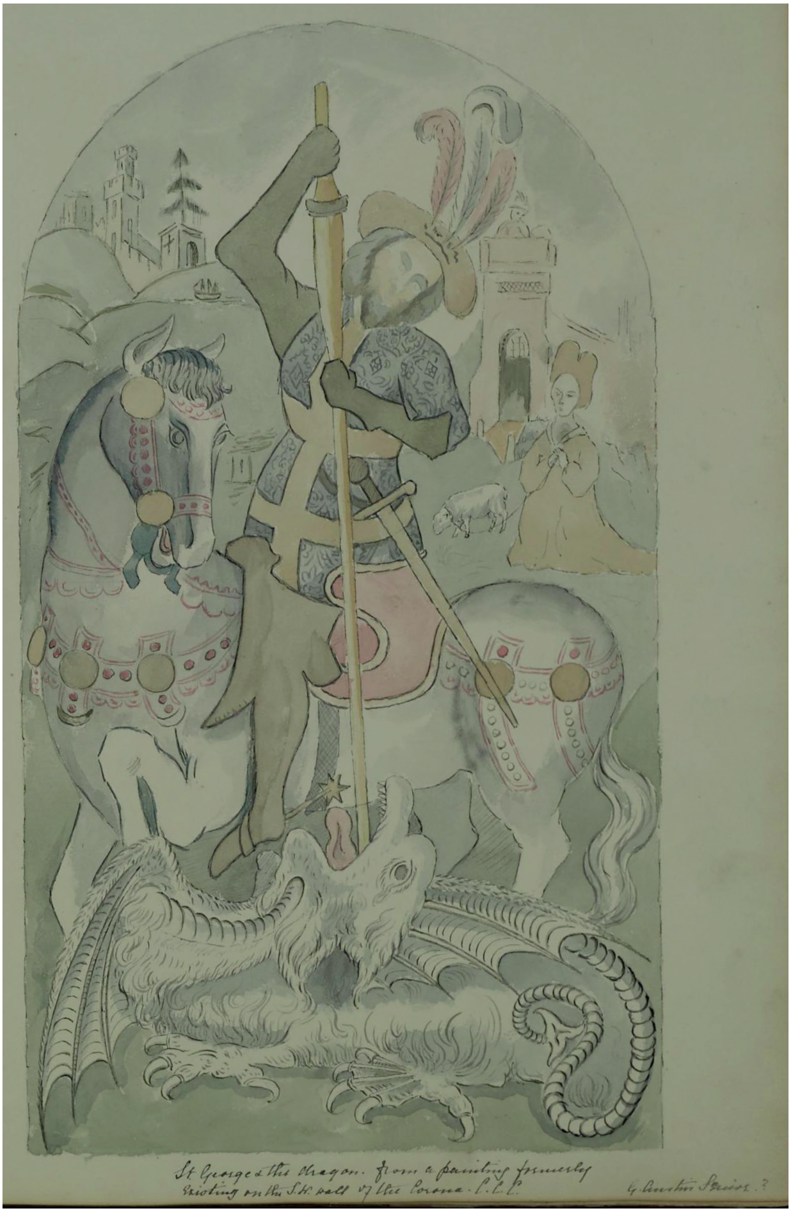

St George & the dragon. from a painting formerly
existing on the S.W. wall of the Corona. C.C.C.
G. Austin Senior.?

Figure 14.7. St. George, George Austin's sketchbook, C.C.A.L. Add. MS. 1.

Placed centrally on the south-western wall of the Corona chapel, this mural seems to have been a movement-filled depiction of St. George as an exemplary late medieval English knight riding a white horse. The horse is shown in side profile facing left but with raised front leg and head turned right as it observes his saintly rider's actions. George is shown in motion during the very act of slaying the winged dragon, coiled directly below him, by plunging a lance into the beast's open maw.

In the right middle ground is a woman with a tethered sheep, the intended sacrifice (Princess Sabia) whom George, according to legend, saves;[26] behind her is a tower with a soldier lookout atop the battlements. In Austin's copy of the original, the figure of the woman is less than half the size of the heroic saint and her pairing with the sheep, the other part of the sacrifice,[27] not only marks her out as the dragon's victim, but emphasizes her as someone who needs protecting. In effect, she acts as the foil to George's bravery and reflects good qualities onto him rather than showing any of her own.

Representations of St. George grew in popularity in the fourteenth century and while we cannot accurately assess style from a Victorian watercolour of a medieval wall painting, the caul headdress of the female figure, which reflects the fashion of a noble woman in the fifteenth century, shows that it is later Gothic.[28] Furthermore, the twisting position of the horse and the dynamic figure of George also stylistically place the image in the fifteenth century, as does the strong element of inherent chivalry in the image which often sees women as accessories to male strength.[29]

Reflections, comparisons and conclusion

All of the Canterbury images of women discussed above were open to public view; indeed, apart from the image of St. Elizabeth, which was in a crypt chapel, they existed along the pilgrim's route around the cathedral. They were therefore seen by monks and visitors alike, both men and women. Contextually, it should be noted that there were far more wall paintings of individual males or groups of men only, all around the cathedral. In the

---

'Relics of decorative painting now or formerly in Canterbury cathedral', *Archaeol. Cant.*, xxii (1897), 34–44.

[26] D. H. Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints* (Oxford, 1978), p. 181.

[27] Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, p. 117.

[28] This headdress observation was also made by Robertson, 'Relics of decorative painting', p. 35.

[29] This dynamic iconography is similar to other 15th-century compositions of this heroic saint's portrayal, such as the wall painting in St. Cadoc's, Llancarfan, Vale of Glamorgan: Rosewell, *Medieval Wall Paintings*, p. 331.

crypt alone my research showed that there are shadows and remains of at least one male group containing four figures; one single mitred saint (male perforce); one complete tetramorph with Christ centrally and the winged man of St. Matthew; and all of the other male-centred paintings in the Gabriel chapel.[30]

These observations do not take into account the etchings found in great number both upstairs and downstairs in the eastern part of the cathedral from the choir onwards. As etchings they do not fall into the category of wall paintings and therefore have not been included in this study, but it is worth mentioning that from roughly seventy etchings, which include at least seventy per cent featuring male figures (saints, pilgrims, kings, bishops) only one image has a female representation – one woman in a crowd of otherwise male onlookers.[31]

The etchings, like the wall paintings, highlight first the sheer number of male images in comparison to female representations, and second, that women never appear without male accompaniment. The only quasi-exception to this is Mary Magdalene in the Trinity ambulatory vaults, yet even this needs contextualizing, since all around her in the surrounding vaults were male saints and kings. She was one of a greater collection.

Certainly, every representation of a woman on the Canterbury walls shows a woman's connection to saintliness, either as a saint herself (Elizabeth, Blessed Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalene), or in relation to a male saint (Theopista and Princess Sabia of the St. George Legend). Sometimes these two categories coincide: the Blessed Virgin Mary as mother to the son of God and St. Elizabeth as mother to St. John the Baptist; even, arguably, Mary Magdalene, who was saved through the teachings of Jesus.

A very clear conclusion is that unless a woman was a saint herself or necessary to a male saint's story, there was no place for women in the wall paintings of Canterbury cathedral. At no point do women occur as 'everyday people' in the same way that men do. Consider the image in which St. Elizabeth appears in Gabriel's chapel; Elizabeth's neighbours are present, but they are all men. Similarly, no women villagers are portrayed in the St. Eustace narrative, yet there are scenes with multiple men in them in that painting. Finally, there are no images where more than one woman appears. Even if she appears more than once (Theopista), there is always just one woman in the image.

One might conclude the data portrayed in this chapter is skewed as most of the wall paintings in Canterbury cathedral are lost due to the natural effects of time and various forms of intentional human intervention, from iconoclasm to misguided restoration attempts. Yet travelling just thirty miles west to Rochester cathedral, another medieval Benedictine house, there are the vestiges of other medieval wall paintings, and it is interesting to make a comparison to Canterbury.[32]

---

[30] East-facing wall of the Gothic crypt, either side of the entrance way.

[31] North-facing pier wall moving from Norman crypt into the Gothic crypt.

There are two easily visible examples of women in Rochester's wall paintings and in complete contrast, neither of them is connected to saints and only one of them was accessible to public view. Although research at Rochester is incomplete, there are also at least two other medieval wall painting remains that show male saints, without women being present.[33]

Rochester's most famous painting is a partial representation of the wheel of fortune, found on the north wall in the choir, and thus not open to general view in medieval times. The message, therefore, was aimed at the resident monks and high-ranking guests. Lady Fortune is shown at the centre of a wheel, which she spins; the men clinging to it (four at Rochester) are at her mercy as they rise and fall from success to failure according to her whim. The metaphor is that trusting to luck as a philosophy is vain, while faith in God and being humble in His sight is the correct way.[34] Although Lady Fortune is the only woman in the painting, just as in Canterbury's paintings, the difference is that she is in charge of the men. Of course, her fickle nature does not reflect well on women as a gender.

The second woman at Rochester makes one element of a larger image. Taking the form of a traceried window with compartments, a wall painting frames the blind arch in the south transept. Its location means that it would have been on public view. On the right shoulder of the arch, in the traditional kneeling pose of a pious worshipper, is a woman in a blue gown, with headdress and wimple, which would probably put her in the fourteenth century. The images on the other side of the arch are far more faded and appear to be male saints and kings in canopied niches. This lay woman is likely to have been the patroness (possibly joint with a husband) who paid for the work to be painted. So, although for the first time among all the paintings discussed we have a glimpse of an 'everyday woman', she is almost certain to have come from the elite classes.

---

[32] Rochester cathedral was founded in 604, with many architectural changes being made in the 12th and 13th centuries. See *Faith and Fabric: a History of Rochester Cathedral*, ed. N. Yates and P. Welsby (Woodbridge, 1996), especially chapters 1 and 2.

[33] St. Christopher, first right pillar in the nave and a bearded, haloed figure in St. Edmund's chapel, south entry to the crypt.

[34] The *Chaworth Roll*, a 14th-century genealogical roll which includes a wheel of fortune at the beginning. In her publication regarding this manuscript, A. Bovey reflected that the origins of the wheel of fortune can be traced back to *Consolation of Philosophy* by Boethius, who reflects on the fickle nature of fate, while in prison for treason in the early 6th century (A. Bovey, *Chaworth Roll* (2005), p. 17).

To conclude, on the surviving evidence in both Canterbury and Rochester, women were less represented on the walls than men. At both Canterbury and Rochester there are more men in the paintings than women, and in both places there are paintings of men only, but never of women only. In Canterbury, although we saw a variety of female types: mothers, wives, virgins and a sinner, they were all seen in relation to men and all in relation to sainthood. At Rochester, while there is an etching of the Virgin Mary on a nave pillar and behind the altar, there are no female saint wall paintings remaining. Yet, at even just two representations (allegorical figure and a contemporary fourteenth-century woman) there is, arguably, a more varied approach to female portrayal than on the walls at Canterbury, where women have no status unless in relation to men, never appear as everyday people, and unless a saint herself or necessary to a male saint's story, were not relevant enough to portray.

15. Commanding un-empty space: silence, stillness and scopic authority in the York 'Christ before Herod'

Daisy Black

Certain medieval dramatic characters crave spectatorship. In late medieval biblical plays, personae representing antagonists such as Lucifer, Herod and Pilate are usually the first to speak. These tyrants are easily identified through their elaborate, self-aggrandizing speeches which demand audience attention, co-operation, and silence.[1] Such a demand was necessary because, while modern theatre director Peter Brook famously viewed empty space as a place of theatrical and spectatorial potential, the medieval performance space was rarely empty.[2] It was full of movement, people, objects, and associations, and carved out of spaces holding very different identities. Civic religious plays, such as those performed at York and Chester between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, played in spaces in which their guildsmen-actors usually performed very different activities, including eating, working, trading and executing.[3] As Philip Butterworth argued, 'Delineation of the playing space did not always exist prior to performance. Sometimes the space needed to be created by the player on his first arrival into the ambit of the audience'.[4] To begin a play, late medieval performers needed to interrupt the everyday usage of their spaces and refashion them

---

[1] On the development of Herod and the medieval tyrant as dramatis personae, see M. A. Skey, 'Herod the Great in medieval European drama', *Comparative Drama*, xiii (1979), 330–64, at p. 333; D. Staines, 'To out-Herod Herod: the development of a dramatic character', *Comparative Drama*, x (1976), 29–53, and P. Doob, *Nebuchadnezzar's Children: Conventions of Madness in Middle English Literature* (New Haven, Conn., 1974), p. 129. On tyrants' mimicry of the performative speech acts of God, see R. M. O'Connell, 'Sovereignty through speech in the Corpus Christi mystery plays', *Renascence*, xxxiii (1981), 117–28.

[2] P. Brook, *The Empty Space* (1968), p. 11.

[3] See N. R. Rice and M. Aziza Pappano, *The Civic Cycles: Artisan Drama and Identity in Premodern England* (Notre Dame, Ind., 2015), pp. 1–39.

[4] P. Butterworth, *Staging Conventions in Medieval English Theatre* (Cambridge, 2014), p. 78.

D. Black, 'Commanding un-empty space: silence, stillness and scopic authority in the York 'Christ before Herod'', in *Gender in medieval places, spaces and thresholds*, ed. V. Blud, D. Heath and E. Klafter (2018), pp. 237–50.

into performance spaces. Tyrant characters performed in spaces in which actors had to communicate across the competing attractions of chattering crowds, merchants, and, in the case of the York cycle, other pageants playing in close proximity. Their opening speeches therefore employed a variety of means to establish playing space and capture their spectators' interest. These included movement and gesture, which physically delineated playing space; vibrant props and costumes, which introduced visual difference and established setting; highly wrought alliterative and rhythmic speech patterns, which altered the space's noise; and devices such as direct address, which shaped audience behaviour within the space.

The success of these speeches as dramatic devices is demonstrated by the frequency with which they appear. The York cycle's audiences witnessed a variety of tyrants. The character type repeatedly appears in the sequence of five plays dealing with the interrogations and tortures of Christ: in Annas and Caiaphas in 'The Trial before Annas and Caiaphas'; in Pilate in the 'First' and 'Second Trial before Pilate', and in Herod in 'Christ before Herod'. York's audiences therefore had a wide variety of tyrants to choose to watch, and, given the physical proximity of the pageants, they could even have wandered between simultaneous pageants to find the tyrant whose performance they found most visually and aurally pleasing. This placed Christ's persecutors in interchangeable competition with one another, meaning there was a real possibility that all five pageants were trying, as Hamlet would say, to 'out-Herod Herod'.[5]

Yet despite his spectacular nature, the tyrant frequently does not sustain the focus of audience attention throughout his play. His authority is often undermined by those who do not explicitly demand, yet command, space and spectatorship because of what they represent. For example, Herod in the York 'Christ before Herod' opens his play and establishes performance space by demanding the audience be silent:

> Rex: Pes, ye brothellis and browlys in þis broydenesse inbrased,
> And freykis þat are frendely your freykenesse to Frayne,
> Youre tounges fro tretyng of triffillis be trased,
> Or þis brande þat is bright schall breste in youre brayne.[6]

This speech aims to silence the audience. However, as the pageant progresses, Herod finds himself expending even more energy trying to force a silent Christ to speak. The use of silent, still or less dynamic characters to undermine the authority of verbally and physically active ones has received little attention outside the York 'Crucifixion' play – perhaps because still or silent characters leave fewer traces in play texts and records than more blusterous characters. Yet these characters can attain a level of command over the performance space that more energetic characters rarely achieve.

---

[5] W. Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. H. Jenkins (Surrey, 1997), III.2 (l. 14).

[6] 'Christ before Herod' in *The York Plays*, ed. R. Beadle (1982), pp. 270–82 (ll. 1–4).

Focusing on the York 'Christ before Herod', this chapter argues that certain dramatic personae command 'scopic authority', or privilege, within their performance spaces, meaning that these figures are able to command audience attention without having to expend a large amount of energy on movement or vocalization. This definition is adapted from Jacques Lacan's discussion of scopic field as being 'looked at from all sides'.[7] Where Lacan's argument imagined the scopic relation of the agency-bearing gaze which constructs the desired object it looks upon, a character bearing scopic authority reverses this dynamic, in that it is the thing gazed upon that bears agency over the spectator. This concept interacts with extramission and intromission: the co-existing late medieval models of vision. Young recently identified the ways in which these theories of sight affect power structures in performance. While extramission places the power to see with the person who emits the ray of light which illuminates an object, intromission places visual power with the object:

> Extramission [….] suggests that the power to see is with the person who emits the ray, and what is seen depends on the state of the person's eye. […] Intromission, therefore, places the power with the *object* to make an impact on the viewer, whereas in extramission the gaze of the viewer had the power.[8]

Characters commanding scopic authority tend to command intromissive properties and hold greater power over the playing space than those who aim to shape their playing spaces through dynamic movement and speech. This chapter finds that, in 'Christ before Herod', the tyrant's attempt to influence the gaze, noise, and movement of his audience places agency with the individual spectators; yet Herod himself becomes a spectator of Christ's less energetic, yet more effective performance of intromissive authority.[9]

The inherent irony of figures commanding scopic authority within spaces is that they are often not dramatic personae who actively solicit spectatorship. Rather, their authority may be constructed in one of three ways. First, it may be fashioned through the speeches of others, which direct attention towards them through description; through forms of direct address (such as questioning) or through descriptions of bodily interaction. Second, authority can be established through a significant change in delivery or movement from what has gone before. This might involve the use of silence, a change in verse form, the use of music, or an increase or reduction in dynamic movement.[10] Finally, it can occur when a dramatic persona represents something beyond their immediate narrative. This is particularly the case for Christ, who commands a spiritual and moral authority which was understood by his audiences, but not always by other characters on stage with him. All three methods appear in the York 'Trial' and 'Crucifixion' pageants, in which a silent or still Christ becomes the pinwheel through which the plays' violent momentum is performed.

---

[7] J. Lacan, *Seminar XI: the Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. A. Sheridan, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller (New York, 1977), p. 71.

[8] A. L. Young, *Vision and Audience in Medieval Drama: a Study of 'The Castle of Perseverance'* (New York, 2015), pp. 15–16. See also S. Biernoff, *Sight and Embodiment in the Middle Ages: Ocular Desires* (New York, 2002), pp. 4–5.

[9] An audience is always made up of individuals who experience a performance differently from one another. See J. McGavin and G. Walker, *Imagining Spectatorship: from the Mysteries to the Shakespearean Stage* (Oxford, 2016), p. 20.

Expending energy

'Christ before Herod' is the thirty-first play of the York cycle (*c.*1377–1569), which covered the history of the world from creation to the last judgement. Pageants were performed by the city's guilds on wagon stages moving in procession throughout the city. Each pageant would have appeared differently in each new space, while also potentially transforming that space for its future use.[11] For example, the last performance station was the pavement – a civic space used throughout the rest of the year for public punishment, including execution.[12] The staging of the 'Crucifixion' in such a space would have had the simultaneous effect of aligning Christ with the criminals usually executed there and problematically linking Christ's persecutors to the civic authorities who sentenced men to die in the same spot.[13] Christina M. Fitzgerald noted that these spaces also reflected the gendered power structures of their everyday mercantile uses, and that the pageants were 'self-consciously concerned with the fantasies and anxieties of being male in the urban, mercantile worlds of their performance'.[14] These were not 'empty' spaces.

---

[10] E.g., in the Coventry 'Pageant of the Shearmen and Taylors', the carol sung by the mothers of the innocents changes the alliteration-heavy dynamic of Herod's speech patterns. See 'Pageant of the Shearmen and Taylors' in *The Coventry Corpus Christi Plays*, ed. P. M. King and C. Davidson (Kalamazoo, Mich., 2000), pp. 83–111.

[11] See G. Walker, 'Medieval drama: the Corpus Christi in York and Croxton', in *Readings in Medieval Texts: Interpreting Old and Middle English Literature*, ed. D. Johnson and E. Treharne (Oxford, 2005), pp. 370–85; C. M. Fitzgerald, *The Drama of Masculinity and Medieval English Guild Culture* (New York, 2007), pp. 1–41, and M. Rogerson, 'Introduction', in *The York Mystery Plays: Performance in the City*, ed. M. Rogerson (Woodbridge, 2011), pp. 1–23.

[12] M. Twycross, '"Places to hear the play": pageant stations at York, 1398–1572', *R.E.E.D. Newsletter*, iii, no. 2 (1978), 10–33.

[13] S. Beckwith, *Signifying God: Social Relation and Symbolic Act in the York Corpus Christi Plays* (2001), pp. xv–xvi.

In order for 'Christ before Herod' to begin, the mercantile spaces of each street station would have had to be transformed into the royal space of Herod's court. The first part of this process was carried out by mechanical and material means. The wagon for 'Christ before Herod' appears to have been particularly elaborate, containing a bedchamber and a court area.[15] The York Litsters, the dyers whose guild produced the pageant, would have been well-placed to deck their playing space with vibrant cloths and soft furnishings. The emphasis on the softness of Herod's bed acts as an advertisement for their trade, effectively dressing the street as their own domain for the duration of the pageant.[16] Once the wagon was secured, performers entered the space and consolidated the new biblical setting. This task initially falls to Herod:

> Rex: Trayeylis noȝt as trattours þat tristis in trayne,
> Or by þe bloode þat Mahounde bledde with þis blad schal ye belde.
> þus schall I brittyn all youre bones on brede,
> ȝe, and lusshe all youre lymmys with lasschis.[17]

Herod's opening speech is aurally and physically dynamic. After his initial opening call for 'Pes', he orders any audience members still, presumably, talking, to cease or 'with þis blad shal ye belde'. Herod's indicative 'þis blade', coupled with the aural violence of the speech's alliterative stress on the words 'brittyn youre bones' and 'lusshe all youre lymmes' suggests that these threats were accompanied by violent, physical movements. While his words command silence, the noisily evocative harshness of Herod's alliterative verse would have altered the street's soundscape. Wright argues that such speeches extend their tyranny to the spectators: 'Herod's authority would be enforced through his rhythmic dominance and control. The audience, therefore, were not only witness to Herod's tyranny, they were victims of it, experiencing it directly through the psychological and physical effects of his irregular verse'.[18] Herod's speech therefore immediately makes several alterations to the street space. It establishes the space as his court; changes the street soundscape; casts the audience as his subjects; and attempts to regulate their speech and movement.

---

[14] Fitzgerald, *Drama of Masculinity*, pp. 1–2.

[15] 'Christ before Herod' (ll. 34).

[16] 'Christ before Herod', (ll. 34 and 47–8).

[17] 'Christ before Herod' (ll. 8–11).

[18] C. Wright, 'Acoustic tyranny: metre, alliteration and voice in 'Christ before Herod', *Medieval English Theatre*, xxxiv (2012), 3–29, at p. 12.

In addition to speech, Herod uses a range of other theatrical devices to secure his audience's attention. These include references to bright props and costumes, explicit and implicit references to energetic movement, and direct address to the audience and to other characters.[19] These devices make Herod's body highly visible within the space, with his eye-catching costume. The use of body-elongating stage properties such as swords combined with active movement mean he also physically takes up a large amount of the space. Furthermore, Herod aims to directly influence the bodily and vocal responses of the audience through ordering their silence and assimilating them into his court. This device admits humour, which relies upon the fact that the civic space of the street was not erased when it became the performance space of Herod's court. This enables Herod to claim affinity with those in the audience:

Rex: And ye þat are of my men and of my menȝe,
Sen we are comen fro oure kyth as ȝe wele knawes,
And semlys all here same in þis cyté
it sittis vs in sadnesse to sette all oure sawes.[20]

This speech underlines a palimpsest of spaces and roles. As king, Herod can claim the people standing in his court space to be his 'menȝe'. As a member of the Litsters' guild, however, performing for kin, colleagues, friends and employees, there is an added element of truth in his statement which moves beyond the biblical court, enters the civic space and even challenges the onlookers to reconsider the moral implications of the spectacular nature of the guild's trade in dyed cloth. The York Litsters draw attention to their 'gaye geare' with a similar double-meaning to the way the York Pinners exhibited their nails in the 'Crucifixion' pageant.[21] Greg Walker and John McGavin recently argued that such moments of blurring created new, pleasurable relationships between players and audiences, 'performance and reality'.[22] Such blurring between subject and object and performer and spectator held the potential to form new cognitive associations with both street space and guild that outlasted Corpus Christi day.[23] However, even as

---

[19] 'Christ before Herod' (ll. 4, 10–11 and 19–40).

[20] 'Christ before Herod' (ll. 23–6).

[21] D. Black, ''Nayles large and lang': masculine identity and the anachronic object in the York Crucifixion play', *Medieval Feminist Forum*, l (2015), 85–104.

[22] McGavin and Walker, *Imagining Spectatorship*, p. 51.

[23] See K. Walker, 'Spectatorship and vision in the York Corpus Christi plays', *Comitatus*, xlv (2014), 169–89, at p. 171: 'the religious content of these plays is not meant to be transitory,

Herod's reference to 'þis cyte' conflates the domains of Herod with the city of York, it also opens the potential for differentiation. Each of York's tyrant characters, including Herod, Annas, Caiaphas and Pilate, represented the (male) authorities of king, church, and political leader. They were not, therefore, at home in the mercantile, guild spaces of York's streets. In fact, as Rice and Pappano have argued concerning the York 'Herod and the Magi' pageant, they are often set in opposition to it.[24] Moreover, as a tyrant entering the guilds' space, Herod's power depends entirely on the response of his spectators. This places the agency of interpretation – and response – firmly with the audience, and not with the tyrant. This diminishes Herod's authority within his space even through the devices attempting to exert it.

As the pageant progresses, Herod's efforts to harness audience attention become increasingly fragile. While Herod's idea of himself – and the way he establishes his own authority – is rooted in ideas of masculine violence, he ultimately comes to embody the more passive role of spectacle. This is demonstrated when he is trying to get Christ to speak. His son and counsellors suggest the prisoner's silence is due to awe at Herod's rich clothing:

I Filius: He loked neuere of lorde so langly alone,
Rex: No sone, þe rebalde seis vs so richely arrayed
He wenys we be aungelis euere-ikine.
II Dux: My lorde, Y holde hym agaste of youre gaye gere.
Rex: Grete lordis augh to be gay.[25]

Herod's account of how intimidating Christ must find him to look upon suggests that he sees himself as the bright object of a (male) gaze. The passage indicates that Herod's costume held similarities with the gilded costumes and wigs used for God and his angels in late medieval performances. It also suggests that more of Herod's power lies in his attire than it does in his actions.

In one sense, this was true of all costumes, which enabled performers to represent biblical figures.[26] Yet costume is an unreliable signifier. Herod initially proclaims that Christ cannot be a king due to his poor clothing: 'Nowe sen he comes as a knave and as a knave cledde, / Whereto calle ye hym a kyng?'[27] This metatheatrical joke reaches its punchline when Herod

---

but imprinted on the imagination of the spectators for future proposes'.

[24] Rice and Pappano, *Civic Cycles*, p. 83: '"Herod and the Magi" casts Herod as a corrupt civic ruler menacingly interfering with the politics of work and fellowship'.

[25] 'Christ before Herod' (ll. 279–84).

[26] Butterworth, *Staging Conventions*, pp. 109–24.

[27] 'Christ before Herod' (ll. 275–6 and 351–61).

clothes Christ in the white clothes of a fool – a role Christ has resolutely refused to play. Moreover, the scrutiny Herod and his courtiers give to attire simultaneously underlines their dramatic constructedness. While, at the pageant's beginning, Herod's repeated references to his 'bright brande' exposed it as a mere stage property – bright, undented and inadequate – his description of his 'gay gere' and 'rich array' was just as likely to encourage an audience to note its tawdriness as elicit admiration. McGavin and Walker identify a similar play between authority and artificiality in masques, claiming that what constituted regal spectacle for certain audience members performed as a subversive comment on regal artifice for others.[28] Drawing attention to the spectacle therefore marks the York Herod out as crafted object, not as agency-bearing gazer. Rather than exercising agency over mercantile space, Herod is merely part of its fabric.

In drawing attention to its own theatrical artifice, this performance holds much in common with what Emma Campbell and Robert Mills have termed 'queer optics', that is, 'a visuality that assumes no necessary link between vision and gendered agency, and posits no visual encounter as "authentic", or stable in its efforts'.[29] In 'Christ before Herod', instability occurs because Herod straddles an uneasy boundary between the violent masculine agency towards which he aspires and his wish to be an observed, desired object. Imagining the prisoner's awe at his clothing, Herod suggests the balance of scopic agency lies with himself – that is, an intromissive interpretation of vision which sees the object (his clothing) emotionally affect the subject (Christ). However, because of Christ's silence, the pageant's nature as guild-crafted object, and the relationship of clothing to the performers' trade, Herod is subjected to processes of extramission from his offstage audience, whose knowledge of this duality informs their interpretation of his costume.[30] Drawing attention to his own spectacle therefore marks Herod out as crafted object, not as agency-bearing gazer. Each of his roles – as violent tyrant and beautifully clothed king – is as artificial as the other, and both play into theatrical tropes which resist stable meaning or authenticity. This queerness is also reflected in Herod's role in the pageant. In discussing the construction of male and female histories in religious biographies, Carolyn Walker-Bynum argued that, while men's narratives tend to be linear and driven by conflict and action, women's are often reduced to an image.[31] Although Herod's opening speech imagines a masculine kingship rooted in conflict and action, he never performs any action of substance during this pageant.[32] Instead, his energetic movements and violent bursts of speech offer his audience a battalion of barely-connected, spectacular images and sounds which resist coherent narrative. When Herod mocks Christ and pretends he is a king, the audience becomes highly aware that, in its space, it is the guildsman playing Herod in his self-dyed clothes who is pretending to be a king. This stands in opposition to the performance of the silent, poorly dressed prisoner, whose own narrative provides the thrust of the entire cycle.

---

[28] McGavin and Walker, *Imagining Spectatorship*, p. 41: 'While the king enjoyed the performance at its most spectacular … other viewers had the opportunity to see the theatrical machinery more obviously as machinery; to view the scenic flats, the props and elaborately costumed actors, at their most contrived and precarious. The further away one was from royal favour, then, the more opportunity to see the entire spectacle as constructed and potentially fraudulent'.

[29] *Troubled Vision: Gender, Sexuality and Sight in Medieval Text and Image*, ed. E. Campbell and R. Mills, (New York, 2004), p. 5.

[30] G. Walker, 'Medieval drama', p. 176.

The strong and silent type

While Herod expends and demands a great deal of energy to command his audience's spectatorship, the reverse is true of Christ. Christ is not initially in the main playing area and, when he does appear, does not utter a word. This raises challenges for an analysis of this play, as, while silent characters placed in vociferous scenes frequently command an audience's focus through their dramatic contrast with their environment, on the page they are often invisible. The York manuscript offers little information about what the actor representing Christ is doing. While a lot is said about and *to* Christ, nothing is said by him. However, clues are provided through the speeches of others about what Christ is *not* doing. Herod, Pilate's soldiers and the courtiers make several remarks concerning Christ's lack of action and speech:

> REX: Comes nerre, kyng, into courte. Saie, can ȝe not knele?
> We schalle haue gaudis full goode and games or we goo.
> How likis þa, wele lorde? Saie. What deuyll, neuere a dele?[33]

Christ does not kneel or bow, perform the anticipated miracles, act the fool or speak. As the main object of the tyrant's actions and speech, attention is frequently directed towards Christ. This process begins before he enters the playing area. Between Herod's waking and his direct acknowledgement of

---

[31] C. Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York, 1994), p. 33.

[32] See O'Connell, 'Sovereignty through speech', p. 123 on the Towneley 'Herod the Great': 'Herod obviously feels that his reiterated resolve is somehow equivalent to an act performed'.

[33] 'Christ before Herod' (ll. 236–8).

Christ's appearance, there are seven variations of the phrase 'we/they brynge here a boy / yonder is a boy'; three direct commands that the prisoner be fetched, and several references to Christ.[34] This anticipation is in part due to the fact that the soldiers' account of Christ as a prophet, magician and fool lead Herod to expect a skilled performance from the prisoner.[35] This undermines Herod's role. In several pageants, the tyrant fulfils the role of eagerly anticipated performer, and is accompanied by heralds and servants who announce his coming to the audience.[36] Here, the tyrant's excited anticipation, coupled with repeated references to the prisoner's coming, suggests that it is Christ, and not Herod, who will form the pageant's main spectacle.

While Herod's opening speech makes his entrance obvious, it is unclear when Christ enters the playing space. The time between Herod's agreement to see Christ and a clear indication of his appearance suggests that Christ was brought in from a long way away – potentially out of sight of the pageant.[37] This broadens the playing space, suggesting action was not confined to the wagon. The fact that, by the end, the pageant accommodates a total of nine characters, coupled with the consideration that the wagon needed to be narrow enough to pass through York's streets, indicates that several characters must have spoken their lines from the street. This would not only have had the effect of collapsing performance and spectating spaces, it would have meant that, unlike Herod, the actor playing Christ entered at, and possibly through, the same level as his audience. He was therefore placed in a position of physical affinity with, rather than in opposition to, his spectators. It is therefore likely that the audience would have been aware of Christ's arrival before Herod.[38]

Christ's arrival effects a switch of roles. While earlier in the play Herod tried to ensure all spectatorship focused upon him, after Christ's entrance he becomes one frustrated spectator among several on-stage spectators, all of whom command Christ to perform for them:

> REX: Hym semys full boudish, þat boy þat þei bring.
> II DUX: Mi lorde, and of his bordyng grete bostyng men blawes.
> REX: Whi, þerfore haue I sought hym to see. […]
> I DUX: Knele doune here to þe kyng on thy knee.

---

[34] 'Christ before Herod' (ll. 55–162).

[35] 'Christ before Herod' (l. 140).

[36] E.g., a messenger announces Herod's imminent arrival in the Towneley 'Herod the Great'.

[37] There are also multiple references to Christ as being 'yonder': 'Christ before Herod' (ll. 69 and 79).

[38] 'Christ before Herod' (ll. 163–4).

II DUX: Naye, nedelyngis yt will not be.
REX: Loo sirs, he mekis hymn no more vnto me
þanne it were to a man of þer awne towne.
I DUX: Whe! Go, lawmere, and lerne þe to lowte
Or þai more blame þe to-bring.
REX: Nay, dredles withouten any doute
He knawes noȝt the course of a kyng.[39]

Christ's refusal to perform any of the anticipated roles of fool, prophet or prisoner shifts the scopic power balance between prisoner and tyrant.[40] Herod anticipated that he would be an active gazer in the 'game' of interrogation, but instead Christ becomes a silent, unresponsive audience member to Herod's performance of frustration. Given Herod's character is entirely dependent on audience reaction for its successful performance, this has the effect of dismantling his authority. He is trying to force Christ into the role of fool without realizing Christ is playing the straight guy.

Herod's struggle to interpret this silent figure further blurs distinctions between civic and biblical spaces. His observations that 'he mekis hymn no more vnto me / þanne it were to a man of þer awne towne' and 'He knawes noȝt the course of a kyng' underline again the duality of Herod's onstage role as tyrant and his offstage role as a guildsman. Butterworth noted that pageants relied upon an agreed pretence between audience and players which 'involve[d] the simultaneous recognition of the player and his represented personage'.[41] This moment, however, breaks that agreed pretence by comically highlighting the distinction between these roles. It also further reduces Herod's agency by placing him on the same level as other men of the 'towne' – that is, the same as any other member of the audience. From being elevated on a pageant and fully in control of the playing space, Herod and his court are now reduced to unruly hecklers.

The longer Christ remains silent and still, the more artificial the other characters' speeches and actions become. As the scene continues, their speech disintegrates from the street-filling, highly wrought alliterative schemes at the pageant's beginning, to a barrage of exclamations, questions, mock Latin and French and, finally, incoherent noise:

II FILIUS: Do crie we all on hym at onys.
Al chylder: Oȝes! Oȝes! Oȝes!
REX: O, ȝe make a foule noyse for þe nonys.[42]

---

[39] 'Christ before Herod' (ll. 173–84).

[40] The soldiers initially claim that, as a professional artificial fool, Christ is taking time to gauge his audience. See S. Billington, *A Social History of the Fool* (Brighton, 1984), pp. 18–20.

[41] Butterworth, *Staging Conventions*, p. 12.

[42] 'Christ before Herod' (ll. 332–3).

The use of the cry ‘oȝez’ to attract Christ’s attention suggests that the pageant’s biblical setting is becoming ‘thin’. Herod and his sons are reverting to the sounds of the medieval street. Their assumption that Christ is deaf suggests that the actor playing Christ made no reaction at all to this cacophony. While O’Connell has noted that mystery play villains tended to parody the performative, creative speech of God, in this pageant, Herod’s parodic speech is placed in ironic opposition to Christ, embodiment of the Word’s, silence.[43] If O’Connell’s connection between speech and performances of kingly prerogative is extended, however, Herod’s desire for Christ to speak generates another level of irony: in demanding speech Herod is witnessing Christ as king.

While Christ’s silence dismantles the power of the other characters’ speech, so too would his stillness in an otherwise highly dynamic scene have drawn his audience’s gaze. One of the powers of stillness on stage is that it has the effect of momentarily placing live performance in dialogue with the image, or icon. Outside the York pageants, Christ’s body would have most often been encountered in the form of an icon; that is, as a piece of sacred craftsmanship. Given that such icons were conventionally displayed in spaces of silent contemplation, Christ’s stillness at the pageant’s heart may have brought something of the sacred space into the secular spaces of the street. Furthermore, Christ’s icon-like stillness links his role of sacred icon to the trade of the performers. The use of blood and scourge-marked leather skins by actors playing Christ have appeared in records outside York, suggesting that, like Herod’s rich clothing, Christ’s body also demonstrated the skill and craftsmanship of the Litsters.[44] However, while attention is drawn to the artificiality of Herod’s body, attention is never called to the crafted nature of Christ’s still, silent body. His costume retains its mystique, while the Litsters’ craft gains new, holy associations.

Icons were never passive objects. They interacted with the medieval viewer; intercessing, healing, comforting, even physically intervening.[45] While Christ’s silence and reduced movement do evoke the icon, they also partake in dramatic forms of spectatorship which require an equal, collaborative power of engagement from his audience. Walker has noted that, unlike the static devotional object, 'the medieval spectator is directly involved in the spectacle'.[46] As this chapter has shown, much of this has to do with the performance space, which calls upon the audience to simultaneously inhabit multiple roles. While Conklin Akbari has noted that models of extromission and intromission both rely on the object of gaze entering the body of the spectator, young claims that dramatic spectatorship requires manipulative participation from both parties: 'Drama is always manipulative of the audience in one way or another. By its nature it requires a certain amount of manipulation from both sides to elicit a response and continue the exchange'.[47] The nature of this mutual manipulation works differently for Herod and Christ. With Herod, each spectator has a choice about whether to work with or against Herod's theatrical, space-filling spectacle. They might react *with* Herod – assuming the role of subjects, falling silent at his commands, and feigning fear and awe at his fine clothing. This reaction supports the transformation of the street space into a biblical court. Alternatively, they might choose to react *against* him – through laughing, heckling, answering him, or rebellion. This reaction reasserts the space of the medieval street, in which the townspeople, not the tyrant, hold the power. The fact that Herod's demands for silence are repeated suggests that this was a common reaction.[48]

---

[43] O’Connell, ‘Sovereignty through speech’, p. 124: ‘The result is an acutely ironic moment where the Word Made Flesh stands mute before His lordly accusers, who assault Him with tempestuous verbage’.

[44] E.g., the skins of white leather appearing in the Smith’s expenditures at Coventry in 1451 (C. Sponsler, *Drama and Resistance: Bodies, Goods, and Theatricality in Late Medieval England* (Minneapolis, Minn., 1997), p. 147).

[45] E.g., the vivacity of the images discussed in *Images, Idolatry and Iconoclasm in Late Medieval England: Textuality and the Visual Image*, ed. J. Dimmick, J. Simpson and N. Zeeman (Oxford, 2002).

With Christ, the audience is not offered this choice. While Herod's behaviour verbally and physically challenges his audience to react, Christ's silence and stillness engages them without giving them power over his reception. His body becomes the focus of the space, and works in dialogue with, rather than physically and aurally against, his spectators. Christ's scopic authority unites his biblical and medieval roles and the spaces he inhabits without setting them in anachronistic opposition. He is simultaneously a prisoner in the court of a biblical tyrant and the immediate icon of the medieval 'now'. He thereby not only throws the inconsistencies of Herod's energetic interactions with space and time into absurd relief, but also challenges the violent masculine agency Herod participates in. What ultimately gives Christ scopic authority over Herod is the fact that his comparative stillness and silence pulls spectators into the performance without delineating their role or demanding participation. He is not physically exhausting to watch, nor is he dependent on audience response to perform his role. Spectator, performer, and space collaborate in Christ, while the palimpsest of performance space, city space, and biblical space coexist without conflict.

---

[46] Walker, 'Medieval drama', p. 189.

[47] Young, *Vision and Audience*, p. 18 and S. Conklin Akbari, *Seeing Through the Veil: Optical Theory and Medieval Allegory* (Toronto, 2004), pp. 24–5.

[48] The link between the York pageants and civic disorder is evidenced by several accounts, particularly those regarding the 'Fergus' pageant, which was passed between guilds and which attracted 'noise, laughter … quarrels, disagreements, and fights'. See A. Bale, *Feeling Persecuted: Christians, Jews and Images of Violence in the Middle Ages* (2010), pp. 109–11.

Rethinking authority

Herod's and his followers' attempt to interpret Christ according to their own view of worldly authority subjects him to the kind of interpretative gaze so often reserved for female figures in performance and art. Sponsler has suggested that Christ's silence during the York torture plays has the effect of queering Christ while denying his subjectivity and making him 'an inert object of […] masculine attacks'.[49] However, in 'Christ before Herod', the assumption that speech reflects subjectivity is challenged. In a space in which all others speak and move excessively, Christ's subjectivity works in collaboration with that of his audience. Moreover, through his silence, Christ resists all the interpretations placed upon him. This resistance is shared with his audience in the form of a joke as Herod's signifiers of power – speech, clothing, movement, and violence – lose their authority and the tyrant is exposed as a local man – no better than those he spectates alongside.

This figure's ability to redirect and hold audience gaze disrupts some of the assumptions made about the presentation of female and queer figures in medieval art as 'stepping stones to advance the male protagonist's subjectivity'.[50] Rather, dramatic personae bearing scopic authority hold the ability to use spectatorship and space as a means of challenging the subjectivity of those persecuting them – reducing them, at best, to mere words. There are many more questions to be asked in this area – particularly concerning whether, if scopic authority is the result of a symbolic body entering the playing space, it is ever possible for Christ to be on stage and *not* be the focus of attention. What is clear in 'Christ before Herod' is that the two protagonists each amplify the spectacular properties of the other. It is also clear that the physical domination of a space – through energetic action and speech – is not necessarily the most effective way of sustaining attention. As he remains still in the midst of chaos, Christ generates a series of visual and spatial memories that survive the pageant's end. Herod, however, performs with glitter and bluster, but little of lasting substance.

---

[49] Sponsler, *Drama and Resistance*, p. 149.

[50] M. H. Caviness, *Visualising Women in the Middle Ages: Sight, Spectacle and Scopic Economy* (Philadelphia, Penn., 2001), p. 14.

Afterword

Leonie V. Hicks

> The young Duke Richard I bursts through one of the gates of Rouen, silhouetted against the city and seated on a grey horse, before slaying Otto the Great's nephew on the bridge; a just response to Otto and Louis d'Outremer's attempts to take Richard's capital.[1]
>
> King Henry I of France, isolated on a hill above the Dives estuary, watches helplessly as his army is cut in two by Duke William II's advance; his anger and grief as men and horses are washed out to sea is reflected his posture and lack of self-control.[2]
>
> A monk of Saint-Ouen in Rouen leaves his monastery at night to meet his lover and, in falling in a river, finds himself at the threshold between life and death and heaven and hell while an angel and the devil argue over the fate of his soul.[3]
>
> Ansered, apostate monk and false pilgrim, ends his days buried at the crossroads in a shallow grave before his body is dug up and eaten by dogs.[4]
>
> Juliana of Breteuil, forced to jump into the castle moat having failed to kill her father Henry I, exposes her buttocks as she falls and her position as a woman out of place as she lands in the icy water.[5]

The Norman historical tradition of the eleventh and twelfth centuries abounds with examples of how space, place and thresholds were used by medieval authors as a means of discussing matters of concern in a didactic context, for example elite military masculinity, clerical and monastic celibacy, and the failed rebellion of a daughter against her father magnified by the latter's position as king. All these examples have in common a strong sense of place.

---

[1] Wace, *The Roman de Rou*, trans. G. S. Burgess with the text of A. J. Holden and notes by G. S. Burgess and E. van Houts (St. Helier, 2002), II: ll. 3253–66.

[2] Wace, *Roman de Rou*, III: ll. 5273–76.

[3] Wace, *Roman de Rou*, III: ll. 337–510.

[4] Orderic Vitalis, *Ecclesiastical History*, ed. and trans. M. Chibnall (6 vols., Oxford, 1969–80), ii. 44–7.

[5] Orderic, *Ecclesiastical History*, vi. 212–15.

L. V. Hicks, 'Afterword', in *Gender in medieval places, spaces and thresholds*, ed. V. Blud, D. Heath and E. Klafter (2018), pp. 251–3.

Referring back to Tracy Collins's chapter in this volume in which she cites Hall's instruction to have 'eyes trained for omissions, ellipses, and small clues', the examples cited above show just that. They were incorporated into the wider narratives not because Orderic Vitalis and Wace, as well as their predecessors Dudo, William of Jumièges and William of Poitiers, were interested in how space and place influenced gender or vice versa; they included these tales because they reflected the wider chroniclers' concerns of lordship, salvation and the correct path in life. Their spatial setting, however, allows modern scholars of medieval gender to seek out those small clues to understand better how norms and exceptions might have been expressed.

This research process is demonstrated by the remarkable evidence collected and sifted in the current volume as well as the many other papers included in the 2017 conference and not submitted here. The choice of themes encouraged participants to draw links between the reasons behind the creation of our medieval sources, written and material, and the information about gender contained therein made manifest by attention to space, place and thresholds. The emphasis on crossing thresholds, movement connecting places making ideas visible, physical acts such as looking and seeing, and the link between place and local concerns demonstrates the variety of ways in which ideas about gender can be teased out and explored.

The effectiveness of considering gendered roles in spatial settings is reflected in the four sections comprising this volume, highlighting different physical acts and aspects of movement, both physical and imagined. Daisy Black's exploration of Herod and Jesus underlines the contrast between the stillness and majesty of Christ, which draws the viewer in, and Herod's bluster and volume that serves to undermine his position. The stillness of the minoress's heart as a suitable receptacle in which to welcome Jesus into her interior life is discussed by Louise Campion; in so doing the heart becomes a home within a home for the homeless Christ. Other chapters examine the layers of explanation that make up medieval people's expectations and experience of space. Einat Klafter demonstrates how Margery Kempe engaged with the places of St. Bridget of Sweden's pilgrimage to Rome, rather than the standard sites of that city familiar to others. Eivor Bekkhus's evocation of pilgrimage and punishment in early medieval Irish sea voyages shows how the similar experiences of cutting adrift could mean different things when viewed through a gendered lens. Layers of place are examined in detail by Sheila Sweetinburgh, who considers how understanding the thresholds between jurisdictions in Canterbury – those of the king, the Church, and the city – can restore women religious to a more central place within late medieval urban history.

Both this volume and the 2017 conference showcase the wide variety of approaches currently taken by scholars of medieval gender to their field of study. As well as reflections on the themes, contributors also considered the intersection of different disciplines, notably history, archaeology and literary studies, and how an awareness of various theoretical approaches including those drawn from cultural geography, sociology, and anthropology alongside literary criticism can open up new questions of familiar material. Above all the contributions gathered in this volume show that gender should not stand alone as a category of analysis, but as an integral component of the medievalist's toolkit in seeking a greater understanding of medieval society.

Index

abbesses, 79 n. 13, 80, 86, 87 n. 47, 182, 182 n. 31
abbots (*see also* St. Albans, abbots of), 56, 58–9
affectivity, 58, 76 n. 5, 162, 164
afterbirth (*turpitudo*), 157, 159 n.15, 169
alabaster, 186–7, 201
Albine (Albina) origin myth, 100–1, 199
amulets, 148, 150–2, 154
anchorholds, 2, 38 n. 60, 157, 167
Anchorites (anchoresses), 12 n. 11, 27, 38, 102–3, 166, 175, 177 n. 20
Anchoritism, 38, 81–2, 82, 102–3, 163, 166–7, 175, 210–11
Ancrene Wisse, 144 n. 29, 177 n. 20, 210
Annaghdown, Co. Galway, nunnery of, 36 fig. 2.3, 37 n. 55
Anne of Bohemia, 189, 198
Annunciation, 196, 222, 225
archaeology, 1–2, 4, 9, 11, 25, 27–8, 33, 35, 37–38, 39 n. 63, 40, 41 n. 77, 42–3, 49, 185–6, 253
architectural features, 27, 32, 35, 37–8, 43, 187, 193, 200, 206, 211, 216, 221, 227, 234 n. 32
    altar, xvii, 16, 21 n. 53, 37–8, 65, 69, 71, 95, 158 n. 10, 159 n. 15, 164 n. 38, 170, 179, 187, 190 n. 26, 191–3, 194 fig. 12.1, 195, 198–9, 210, 235
    apse, 220, 221
    ceiling, 193, 198, 199, 223, 225 n. 17
    chantry, 62, 191–3, 196 n. 41
    masonry, 42, 190 n. 26, 223
    nave, 21, 196 n. 41, 219, 222, 234 n. 33, 235
    pillar, 104, 228, 234 n. 32, 235
    rood loft, 222
    roundels, 222
    transept, 37, 222–3, 224 fig. 14.2 and 14.3, 228, 234
    tympanum, 222
Arnulf of Villers, 205 n. 4, 209, 216–17
Arundel, Thomas, archbishop of Canterbury, 190, 196
audience, agency of, 237–8, 239 n. 9, 241–3, 245, 247, 249–50
Augustinian rule, 108, 110–11, 211
Augustinians, 27, 33, 35, 41, 77, 108 n. 7, 111, 211
Austin, George, 225, 230, 231 fig. 14.7, 232

Baker, Augustine, 76–8, 80, 83, 86, 88
    writings of, 79–80, 86, 86 n.41
Baston, Lincolnshire, 61, 71
    St. John the Baptist guild, 61, 67, 71
beds (*see also* bedchamber, deathbed), 21, 101, 131, 140, 161, 163, 178, 192, 221, 221 fig. 14.1, 241
bedchamber, 163–4, 174, 241
beguinage, 5, 157, 207
Beguines (*see also* beguinage), 207, 212, 215–16
Benedictine rule, 10, 13, 16, 49, 108–10

‘ , in *Gender: places, spaces and thresholds* , ed. V. Blud, D. Heath and E. Klafter (2018), pp. 255–

Benedictines, 10, 13, 38 n. 61, 49, 75–7, 78 n. 10, 79 n. 11, 80, 86, 88, 108 n. 7, 110, 188, 219, 234
Bethlehem, xv–xviii
  Church of the Nativity, xv–xvi
  Manger Square, xvi
blood, xvi, 107, 142, 142 n. 15, 148 n. 49, 154, 160–1, 164–6, 176, 177 n. 18, 241, 248
  menstrual, 161–2, 164
Boccaccio, Giovanni, 116
body, 3, 45, 61, 67, 84–5, 118, 125, 132, 142, 144, 148–9, 151, 154, 157, 159, 160–1, 167, 173, 177, 179, 186, 190 n. 26, 191, 194, 199, 210, 213, 216, 242, 248–51
  female, 149, 151, 154, 159, 160–1, 167
  male, 45, 242, 248
  of Christ, 125, 157–60, 162 n. 28, 163, 164 n. 38, 165, 167, 169, 248, 249
borders, 12, 223, 224 fig. 14.2 and fig. 14.3
bosses, 219, 225 n. 17
Boston, Lincolnshire, 62, 66–7, 70, 72
  Corpus Christi Guild, 62, 66–7, 68, 72
boundaries, 5–6, 12–13, 15, 18, 29, 34, 43, 47, 62, 73, 77, 104, 205–6, 209, 215, 244
Bourdieu, Pierre, 29, 213
bourgeois, 173–5
Brandt, Bill, photographer, 200 fig. 12.4, 201
Bridgettine order, 134, 178
Brook, St. Mary's, church of, 10, 222
Bruisyard, 175, 182
Burghersh family, 188, 191 n. 30, 198
Butler, Judith, 3
Byrne, Mary, 98, 98 n.16
Byzantine, 151, 220
Cáin Adamnán (law), 97–8
Cambrai, Our Lady of Comfort, 77, 87–9
  archives of, 78–83
  Benedictine nuns of, 76–7, 86 n. 40, 88
campus floridus, xv–xvii
Canair, holy woman from Benntraige , 104–5
Canterbury, xviii, 3–4, 6, 8 fig. 1.1, 9, 11–16, 18, 20–2, 107–8, 112, 114, 150, 185, 198, 222, 252
  Holy Sepulchre's nunnery, 11–13, 15–17, 19–21
  St. Augustine's abbey, 12–13, 15–16, 18
  St. James's hospital, 13–17, 19–22
  St. Lawrence's hospital, 11, 15–22
Canterbury cathedral (*see also* Canterbury, Christ Church priory), 5, 186–7, 188 n. 11, 189–91, 192 n. 33, 194 fig. 12.1, n. 37, 195, 195, fig. 12.2, 197, 197 fig. 12.3, 198 n. 45, 219–20, 221 fig. 14.1, 222–3, 224 figs. 14.2 and 14.3, 225, 226, 226 fig. 14.4, 228 n. 21, 229 fig. 14.6, 230, 232–5
  St. James's Shrine, 192
Canterbury, Christ Church priory (*see also* Canterbury cathedral), 13–14, 19, 220 n. 6 and n. 7
  prior of (Thomas Chillenden, 1391–1410), 190
castles, 10, 31–2, 34n. 48, 42, 189, 198, 251
  moated sites, 42, 251
Cathars, Catharism, 158, 162–9
celibacy (*see also* virginity), 1, 4, 29 n. 19, 108–9, 111–12, 114–16, 118–19, 121, 251
Certeau, Michel de, 29 n. 16, 75 n. 1, 88 n. 48, 213–14

Cessair, origin myth, 100
chapels (*see also* architectural features), 16, 20–1, 65, 68–9, 71–2, 111, 125, 129, 134–45, 187, 188 n. 13, 189, 190–3, 195, 195 fig. 12.2, 196 n. 41, 197–8, 201, 213, 219–23, 226–8, 232–3, 234 n. 33
charity, xvii, 16, 50–1, 56, 64, 127–8, 131, 180, 198, 214–17
Chaucer, Geoffrey, 1, 4, 82, 107–12, 114–16, 118, 121, 199, 209 n. 19
Chaucer, Geoffrey, *Canterbury Tales*, 4, 82, 107–8, 112, 114–15, 121
  General Prologue, 107, 109, 121
  Knight's Tale, 107
  Monk's Tale*,* 107–21
  Nun's Priest, 108, 112, 115–16, 118–19
  Prioress's Tale, 112, 114
  Shipman's Tale*,* 112–14, 116, 119
  Sir Thopas*,* 114–15
  Squire's Tale, 107
childbirth, xvi, 2, 5, 139–40, 142–5, 147–50, 152, 154–6, 157, 159 n.15, 166, 169
Christ (*see also* body, Man of Sorrows, Canterbury, *imitatio Christi)*, xv–xviii, 5, 14, 34, 53, 54, 55, 103, 104, 124 n. 5, 125, 130–1, 133, 143, 155, 157, 163–4, 169, 215, 217, 222, 225–6, 228, 233, 252
  as visitor/bridegroom, 171–3, 176–82
  and optics, 244, 246, 249
  and queerness, 244, 250
  authority of, 239–40, 245, 250
  depictions of, 220, 225, 233, 228
  Passion of, 126, 134, 198
  silence of, 238, 243–4, 247–8, 250
  stillness of, 237–52
  vision of, 133, 161, 179, 228
Christianisation, 93–4, 96–7, 100, 102, 105
Christina of Markyate, 45–7, 56 n. 49
Christmas, 42, 69, 95
claustral plan (*see also* architectural features), 35, 38, 43
clerics, 4, 20–1, 69, 95–7, 116, 175, 209, 219–20, 225, 251
Clonmacnoise, Co. Offaly Co. Offaly, nuns' church of, 27
confession, 79, 87, 108, 160, 163–5, 167–70, 177–81, 213, 216
  as housekeeping, 177–81
confessor, 76, 87, 89, 105, 165, 167, 169
Constable, Barbara, 76, 80
convents, 1, 4, 37 n. 58, 76–9, 81, 83, 86, 88, 116, 172, 182, 207, 214
  in exile, 75, 77–88
  reading in, 172–3, 182
  founders, female, 27
Cork, Co. Cork, nunnery of, 28
Corona chapel, 225–6, 228, 232
costume rhetoric, 108–9, 114–15, 121
Council of Constance, 134, 135
Council of Trent, 77, 81
Council, Fourth Lateran, 167, 177
counsel, 45, 55–9
court, court room, 20, 22, 63, 163, 168–70, 189, 190, 193, 195–6, 198–200, 241–2, 245, 247, 249
crypts (*see also* architectural features, undercroft), 185–6, 189 n. 23, 190–2, 194, 194 fig. 12.1, 195 fig. 12.2, 220, 223, 232–3, 234 n. 33
customs, 18, 41 n. 77, 42, 93, 103, 105, 151

daughters, 13, 15, 77, 103, 141, 147, 161, 188, 189, 196, 199–200, 214, 251
deathbed, 81, 86–7
de Certeau, Michel, 29 n. 16, 75 n. 1, 88 n. 48, 213–14
deformity, 151–2, 152 fig. 9.4

de Mohun, Joan, 5, 185, 187–97, 199, 200, 200 fig. 12.4
de Mohun, John, 188–9
demons, 104, 142–4, 147–8, 151, 154–5
desert, 34, 93–4
de Voragine, Jacopo, 141, 228, 230
devotion, 3, 4, 5, 74, 76, 77, 81, 87, 88, 89, 94, 95, 123 n. 3, 125, 132, 135, 141, 147, 152, 155, 157, 164, 171, 172, 178, 180, 182, 183, 188, 198, 222, 225, 249
Dissolution, 25, 40, 42
diversity, 35 fig. 2.3, 38, 42–3, 207
divine office, 31, 38
Doctrine of the Hert, The, 172–3, 175–8, 181–3
domesticity, 173 178 179 180 181 182, 183
  domestic allegory, 172–3, 175–82
Dominicans, 77, 210
doors, doorways, 5, 45, 46, 88 n. 49, 177 n. 19, 180, 205, 206, 208, 214, 215, 217, 221
dragons, 1, 5, 142–5, 150–1, 154–5, 211, 230, 232
Drumalgagh, Co. Roscommon, nunnery of, 36 fig. 2.3, 37 n.55
Dunster, 188, 189
dynastic power, 187, 190

effigies, 5, 186, 187, 190, 192, 193, 194, 196, 197, 199, 200, 201
enclosure, 1, 4–5, 34–5, 81, 171, 173, 206–8, 210, 212, 214, 217
environment, 4, 29, 38, 47, 65, 75, 77, 78, 95, 187, 206, 245
Eucharist, 157, 165, 167, 170, 179
Evangelists, 221, 222, 225
exile, 1, 94, 110, 189, 199

Fabri, Auda, 158–70
fabric, 33, 43, 47, 234 n. 32, 222, 225, 244
family, 13, 15, 17, 32, 39, 69, 100, 140, 152, 154, 159, 162 n. 28, 163, 186 n. 7, 188, 189, 198 n. 46, 215, 222, 228, 230
fathers, 79, 83, 97, 98, 100, 142, 171, 212, 215, 221, 222, 251
female monasticism (*see also* nunneries), 25, 27–8, 30–1, 38–40, 42–3, 217
female religious, *see* nuns
femininities, 5, 56 n. 52, 143, 144, 167, 208
feminism, 2, 9, 28, 105
fields (space), xv, 10, 34, 35 n. 53, 42
filth, 5, 157, 159 n. 15, 165, 169, 177, 177 n. 19
fornication, xv, xvi, 109, 115
Franciscan, xvi–xvii, 37 n. 58, 77, 175, 182
funerary, 185, 186, 193 n. 36, 200, 225

Gabriel, angel, 220, 221 fig. 14.1, n. 9, 222, 225, 226
Gascoigne, Catherine, 76, 80, 86, 87
Gascoigne, Margaret, 81, 87
gates, 12, 18, 205, 206, 214, 215, 216, 217, 251
gender, xv, xvii, xviii, 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 9, 25, 31, 47, 56, 65, 93, 97, 103, 109, 121, 150, 185, 186, 205, 217, 222, 228, 234, 241, 244–5, 252, 253
  as performative, 109, 121
  constructions of, 4, 47, 56, 65
  representations of, 5–6, 103, 219, 222, 228, 234, 252
  gender roles, 14, 39, 47, 61–4, 104, 120, 140, 200, 222, 226, 228, 252
  gender studies, xviii, 1–3, 25, 56, 185–6, 252–3

gendered experience, 2–4, 6, 97
gendered places (*see also* anchorholds, convents, landscape, monasteries, nunneries), xv, 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 25
gendering, 6, 7, 31 65–6, 68, 71, 193, 206, 210, 212, 217, 241, 244
Geoffrey de Gorron (1119–45), 45–6, 51, 52, 53
Gerald of Wales, 34, 51 n. 29
gift, 13 n. 22, 15, 16, 17, 21, 53, 70, 111 n. 18, 113, 161, 176, 189, 190, 196, 197, 212, 216
Gilchrist, Roberta, 2, 4, 9–11, 12 n. 13, 13, 28, 31, 37 n. 37, 41 n. 77, 42, 112 n. 19, 186 n. 5
Gobert d'Aspremont (*Goberti*), 205 n. 4, 215, 215 n. 44, 216, 216 n. 45 and n. 46, 217
Golden Legend, Jacobus de Voragine, 228, 228 n. 22, 230, 232 n. 27
Gothic, 220, 225, 232, 233 n. 30 and n. 31
graffiti, 38 n. 59, 194
Guainerius, Anthonius, 140
guilds (*see also* Lincoln, Lincolnshire, Louth, Stamford, York), 4, 16, 20, 61–4, 237, 240–5, 247

habitus, 30, 38, 128
hagiography, 46, 51, 56–7, 139, 141,143–5, 150–1, 154
hanape (cup), 196
Harlaxton, Lincolnshire, 68
heart, 5, 56, 147 n. 41, 172, 174, 176–7, 178, 182, 192, 198, 210, 212, 214, 248, 252
heraldry, 192, 198
heresy, 5, 157, 158, 163, 165, 170
hermit, 45, 46, 93, 175, 208
Herod, 237–50, 252
    and demands for silence, 238, 243, 247–50
hinterlands, 9–11, 25, 38–42, 187
holiness (*see also* Canterbury, Louth, Lincolnshire), xvi, 50, 53, 58, 63, 81, 94, 95, 96, 111, 111 n. 16, 124, 125, 145, 158 n. 10, 159 n. 15, 177, 180, 225, 228, 248
Holy Land, xvi–xvii, 82 n. 23, 123, 125–6, 129–30, 134–5, 178, 216
hospitals, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 16 n 31, 17, 18, 18 n. 42, 19, 20, 21, 22, 22 n. 63, 23, 43 n. 89, 46–9, 51–2, 54, 57
household, 13, 31, 139, 149, 160 n. 19, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 179 n. 27, 181, 182, 183, 189, 207, 212, 214, 215, 217
husbands, 68, 70, 72, 115, 131, 132, 159, 162 n. 28, 163, 165, 167, 180, 181, 188, 189, 190, 200, 215, 219, 219 n. 2, 222, 228, 230, 234

Ida of Léau, 208, 213, 214, 217
Ida of Louvain, 214–15
Ida of Nivelles, 208, 212, 213
Ignatian spirituality, 76–7, 86–8
images, 1, 53, 82, 84, 152 n. 70, 155 n. 78 and n. 79, 172, 178, 213, 215, 219, 222, 225, 226, 228, 230, 232, 233, 234, 245, 248 n. 45, 249 n. 48
Imitatio Christi, 76 n. 5, 130, 132
Immrama
    Immram Brain, 102–3
    Immram Curaig Maíle Duin, 96–7, 103
    Immram Curaig ua Corra, 95, 97, 104
    Immram Snédgusa ocus Maic Riagla, 96–7
indulgences, 4, 124, 124 n. 6, 125, 129, 130, 134–5, 135 n. 39
Inishmaine, Co. Mayo, nunnery church of, 33, 36 fig. 2.3, 37 n.55
Iona, Scotland, nunnery church of, 37
islands, 93–7, 99–105

Jean de Meun, 209, 209 n. 17
Jerusalem, xv, 125, 126, 132–4, 185
Jesus, *see* Christ
jewellery, 50, 54, 195, 196, 197, 198, 223
John of Gaunt, 189, 196, 196 n. 43
John of the Cross, 82
journey (*see also* pilgrimmage), xvii, 3, 4, 82, 95, 102, 105, 111, 133, 181, 215, 228
Juetta of Huy, 208, 212, 213, 214, 215, 217
Julian of Norwich, 76, 78–9, 81, 85, 87–8, 124, 161–3, 166, 168
Juliana of Mont-Cornillon, 208, 211, 212

Katherine group, 141, 144
Kempe, Margery, 1, 4, 123–35, 161 n. 22, 161 n. 26, 175 n. 12, 252
Kildare, Co. Kildare, cathedral of, 32 fig. 2.2, 33–4
Killevy, Co. Armagh, nunnery church of, 33
Killone, Co. Clare, nunnery of, 35, 36 fig. 2.3
kings, 12, 13, 13 n. 16, 15, 46, 52 n. 36, 53, 56, 56 n. 52, 83, 96, 103, 192 n. 34, 196, 199, 209, 219 n. 2, 226, 233, 234, 242, 243, 244, 244 n. 28, 245, 248, 251, 252
Kirton-in-Lindsey, Lincolnshire, 67

Lacan, Jacques, 239
Lakoff, George, and Mark Johnson, 3
landscape, xvi, xviii, 1–4, 9–11, 15–18, 22, 28–33, 38–43, 47, 50, 54, 171, 180, 185, 187, 200
Lefebvre, Henri, 3, 29 n. 16, 205
lepers, 4, 10, 11, 14, 47–9, 51–3, 57–8, 212
life course, 3, 5, 30–1, 174
liminality, 10, 22, 108, 121, 185, 187, 193
Lincoln, 48, 68, 71
    Blessed Virgin Mary Guild, 62, 63, 66, 68, 69, 70
Lincoln, Guild of the Resurrection, 68
    St. Lawrence Guild, 68
Lismullin, Co. Meath, nunnery of, 27
liturgy, liturgical, 31, 35 n. 54, 123 n. 3, 148, 149, 193, 215, 216, 222
location, 2, 3, 10, 11, 12, 13, 13 n. 21, 15, 17, 18, 27, 29, 31, 32, 32 fig. 2.2, 37 n. 58, 38, 70, 83, 124, 129, 133, 163, 173, 185, 187, 188, 216, 222, 223, 234
Long Sutton, Lincolnshire, 65
lords, lordship, 12, 17, 41–2, 113, 116, 180, 188–9, 248 n. 43, 252
Louth, Lincolnshire, 34, 62, 63, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70
    Holy Trinity Guild, 62, 63, 66, 67, 68, 69
    St. James's Church, 63
Low Countries, 77, 86 n. 39, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 214, 217
Lydgate, John, 139, 141, 143, 145–8, 146 fig. 9.1, 147 fig. 9.2, 150–2, 152 fig. 9.4, 155–6, 155 fig. 9.6, 156 fig. 9.7
lying-in room, 5, 139–45 147–51, 153, 155–6, 160

Man of Sorrows, 225, 226 fig. 14.4, 230, 230 n. 24
Mandeville, John, *Book of Marvels and Travels*, xv, xvi, xvii, 1
manors, 12, 15, 41–2, 191–2
Marie d'Oignies, 167 n. 56, 207, 208, 210, 215 n. 42
Mary Magdalene, 149–50
masculinities, 4, 46, 47, 107, 108, 112, 114, 116, 121, 161 n. 26, 208, 240 n. 11, 241, 243–5, 249–51

  and hunting, 109, 114, 121
medievalism, 82, 88
men, 50, 51, 80 n. 14, 85, 87, 94, 95, 96, 99, 101, 105, 114, 116, 119, 127, 129, 130 n. 28, 133, 167, 171, 180, 206 n. 5, 212, 213, 230, 233, 247, 250
  Holy, 4, 46, 95, 96, 208
  Lay, 108, 188
mendicant orders, *see* Dominicans, Franciscans
miracles, xvi, xvii, 49, 98, 134, 149, 150 n. 55, 164 n. 40, 170, 219
Mirk, John, 139, 141, 149
misogyny, 35, 56, 117, 120
Mohun Chronicle, 100, 100 n. 21, 188 n. 14, 199, 200
Molough, Co. Tipperary, nunnery of, 35
monasteries, estates, 4, 11, 12, 20, 25, 27, 27 n. 6, 28, 30, 31, 40, 41, 42, 47, 53, 77, 93, 94, 95 n. 4, 108, 109, 110, 111–12, 114, 118, 121, 187, 190, 207, 216, 225 n. 17, 251
  female, 12, 25–44, 207, 217
  foundations, 46–7, 49–55, 57–8
  male, 28, 37, 108, 109, 110, 114, 118, 121, 190, 208
monasticism (*see also* female monasticism), 4, 25, 27, 28, 30, 77, 94, 95 n .4, 108–12, 118, 208, 216
monuments, 33, 34, 46, 71 n. 65, 185, 186, 187 n. 8 and n. 10, 192, n. 33, 193 n. 36, 195 n. 40, 196 n. 41, n. 42 and n. 44, 200, 219, 219 n. 1, 225, 230
More, Agnes, 82–3
More, Gertrude, 76, 78–79, 83
  family of, 83
  writings of, 79, 83, 84, 86–7
Mortimer, Ann, 145
mothers, xvi, 19, 58 n. 60, 97, 123, 140, 150, 151, 160, 161 n. 23 and n. 24, 166, 178, 180, 188, 189, 190 n. 23, 199 n. 49, 220, 222, 226, 228, 230, 233, 235, 240 n. 10
murals, 5, 220, 221 n. 8, 222, 232
mysticism, xvii, 4, 75–9, 83, 88, 123–6, 129, 157, 161–70
  mystic space, 75, 77–8, 88

nunneries, 4, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 25, 27, 26 fig. 2.1, 27 n. 5, 28, 30, 32, 32 fig. 2.2, 33, 34, 35, 36 fig. 2.3, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 52, 175, 208
  estates of, 9, 15–17, 22, 25, 38–43
  nunscapes, 38, 43, 185
nuns, 31, 172, 175, 182, 252

Order of the Garter, 187, 188, 189, 198, 200

pagan, 34, 95, 99, 103, 105
paintings, 187, 221, 222, 223, 225, 226, 227, 228 n. 21, 230, 232 n. 2, 233, 234, 235
Paris, Matthew, 46–9, 50 n. 19, 51–9
  Gesta Abbatum, 46–9, 52–4, 56, 58
Paris, Our Blessed Lady of Good Hope, 78–9, 83
parishes (*see also* parish guilds), 4, 10, 12, 16, 17, 18, 20–1, 22, 37, 61–5, 71, 219
parish guilds, 61–74
parishioners, 19–20, 21 n. 59, 22, 37
patronage, 2 n. 2, 12, 13, 14, 15, 27, 29 n. 19, 31, 32, 37 n. 56, 43, 63, 146, 154, 188, 200
peregrination/*peregrinatio*, *see* pilgrimage
performance, 3, 6, 25, 38, 43, 103, 107, 109, 132, 144, 160, 166, 206, 237–50
pigment, 220, 223
Pilate, 237, 238, 243, 245

pilgrimage (*see also* journey), xvii, 1, 4–5, 56, 84, 93–4, 96–7, 102–3, 105, 108, 110–12, 114, 116, 123, 124, 130, 132, 134–5, 160, 170, 178, 188, 252
pilgrims, xv–xviii, 58, 94, 96–7, 103, 107 n. 3, 108, 110, 112, 114–16, 118, 120–1, 123, 124 n. 8, 127–8, 131, 141, 192–3, 215, 219, 232–3, 251
poverty, 39, 108, 109, 118, 119, 121, 175, 182, 124, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 132
  'vow of', 108, 109, 118, 121
  care of the poor, 53, 54, 124, 126–8, 128 n. 21, 129 n. 25, 131, 132, 177 n. 20, 215
Power, Eileen, 219
pregnancy, 99 n.19, 142, 144, 148, 150
prehistoric, 33–4
priests, 15, 16, 37, 49, 87, 108, 111 n. 18, 112, 115, 118, 119, 120, 159, 163, 164 n. 38, 167, 168, 175, 191, 193, 212
public persona, 22, 55, 58, 118, 211
punishment, xvi, 4, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 104, 105, 111, 131, 145, 159, 209 n. 18, 216, 217, 240, 252
  setting adrift, 94–9, 100, 105
Purdans, Margaret, 175, 182

reading, 76, 78, 80, 87–8, 139–40, 142, 147–8, 150, 152, 154–6, 171–3, 175, 178, 182–3, 225
  women readers, 173, 175
recluse (*see also* Anchorites), 27, 88, 207, 209, 210, 211, 212
recusancy, *see* convents in exile
relics (*see also* reliquaries), 47, 49–50, 58, 124–6, 128, 140–1, 148, 150, 151 n. 62, 154, 156, 232 n. 25
religious life, 20, 23, 30–1, 38, 42–3, 64–5, 72, 75, 78, 84, 88, 108, 111–12, 116, 175, 206–7, 211–12, 215, 252
reliquaries, 198, 222
Richard II, 61 n. 1, 73, 189, 192 n. 31, 196, 198
rituals, 3–4, 18, 31, 33 n. 43, 38, 144, 148 n. 52, 152 n. 70, 154, 166, 185 n. 1, 186 n. 6, 205, 210
Rochester Cathedral, 234, 235
Roman de la Rose, xvi, 209
Rome, 3, 4, 123, 124, 125, 126, 128, 129, 130, 131–135, 141, 252
  as Eternal City, 5, 124, 129, 130, 133, 134, 135
  Holy Apostles, Church of, 129
  Stacions of Rome, 124
Rose, xv, xvi, xvii, xviii

sacrality, xvi, xvii, 38, 73, 74, 133, 156, 187, 190, 193, 198, 248
sacraments, 43, 158 n. 10, 170
sacrifice, 177, 232
St. Ailbe, 93–6
St. Albans, abbey, 45 46 50 53 54 57 58
  abbots of, 46–7, 49–59
  Leofric (970–90), 53–54
  Paul (1077–93), 52, 54
  Simon (1167–83), 50, 58
  Warin (1183–95), 49n.14, 50–2, 54–55, 57–8
  William of Trumpington (1217–35), 57–8
  construction work at, 47, 50, 53–5, 57–8
  monks of, 45–6, 48, 50, 55–7
St. Albans, St. Mary de Pré, 47–50, 51 n.25, 52–8
  nuns of, 45, 47, 49, 50, 52
  construction work at, 47, 50, 53–5, 57–8
  monks of, 45–6, 48, 50, 55–7
St. Amphibalus, 46 n.5, 49–54, 57–8

St. Bridget of Sweden, 1, 4, 5, 78, 84–5, 123–6, 126 n. 14, 128–30, 131–5, 172–3, 175, 178–82, 252
  Liber Celestis, 172–3, 175–6, 178–83
St. Catherine de O'Conyl, (Monasternagallighdubh), Co. Limerick, nunnery of, 35, 36 fig. 2.3, 37, 38 n. 60, 41
St. Dorothy (patron saint of midwives), 150
St. Elizabeth, 221, 221 fig. 14.1, 222, 226, 228, 232, 233
St. Eustace, 228, 229 fig. 14.6, 230, 233
St. George, 230, 231 fig. 14.7, 232, 233
St. John the Baptist, 61, 67, 71, 220, 221, 221 fig. 14.1, 222, 228, 233
St. Lawrence, 180
St. Margaret of Antioch, 5, 139, 141–2, 144–5, 146 fig. 9.1, 147 fig. 9.2, 149 fig. 9.3, 156, 160 n. 18, 211, 211 n. 26
  blood, 142, 148, 154
  childbirth, 140, 142–4, 147–51, 149 fig. 9.3, 152 fig. 9.4, 153 fig. 9.5, 154–6, 155 fig. 9.6, 156 fig. 9.7
  versions of the *Life*, 139, 141, 144–6, 149–52, 154–6
St. Mary Magdalene, 150, 226, 227, 227 fig. 14.5, 228, 233
St. Patrick, 93, 96
St. Thomas Becket, 4, 150, 187, 188, 192, 198, 219
saints' lives (*see also* Hagiography), 45 n. 2, 97, 130, 205 n. 4, 207 n. 10, 209, 212, 213, 215–16
salvation, 81, 96, 103–4, 161, 167, 168, 188, 252
sanctity, 4, 46, 50–1, 56, 58–9, 128, 130, 134–5, 208
scopic authority, 239, 241, 243, 244, 245, 247, 249, 250
sea, 84–6, 93–105
  men in sea narratives, 94–5, 97
  pilgrimages at, 93–6, 105
  symbolism of, 84–6
  women in sea narratives, 94, 97–8, 101–2, 104
senses, 82, 205, 213, 217
servants, 31, 48, 72, 131, 162 n. 28, 246
sexual misconduct, 100–1, 104, 111, 113–115, 119–20, 214
sight, 54, 85, 144, 181, 193, 205, 210, 211, 234, 239, 244 n. 29, 246, 250 n. 50
sons, 46, 98, 107, 159, 163, 166, 188, 189, 196, 200, 221, 225 n. 17, 226, 228, 230, 233, 243, 248
sovereignty goddess, 99–100, 104, 105
space, xv–xvi, xviii, 1–6, 9, 13, 25, 29, 22, 30–1, 34–5, 37–8, 43, 45–6, 59, 61, 64, 70–1, 75, 77–8, 80, 84, 88, 108, 121, 129, 139–42, 150, 156–7, 162–5, 167–8, 170–85, 187, 190–5, 203, 205–6, 208– 14, 217, 219–20, 223, 230, 237–52
  and identity, 3, 16, 18, 23, 35, 71, 170,186, 194, 201, 207, 214
  and performance, 237–50
  and physical environment, 3, 5, 9–10, 29, 46, 54, 58–9, 61, 64, 75, 129, 140, 162, 210, 238, 250
  contested, xv–xvi, 171, 173
  domestic, 5, 139, 149, 162–3 171 174 176 177 178 182 183, 207–8, 214–15, 217
  enclosed, 1, 4–6, 30, 34–35, 49 n. 14, 81, 140, 157, 163–4, 166–7, 171–3, 176, 206–8, 210, 212, 214, 217

  gendered, xv, xvii, 1–3, 6, 9, 30, 43, 70, 121, 139, 156, 157, 162–6, 168, 170, 206, 208–9, 213, 217, 252
  imaginary, 1–3, 171–3, 176, 178, 180, 182–3, 185, 200
  liminal, 2–4, 10, 13, 22, 79, 88, 108, 121, 132, 185, 187, 193, 206
  monastic, 4–5, 9, 25, 30, 35, 38, 43, 187, 190, 217, 219–35
  private, 30, 162, 165
  public, 5, 30, 162, 216, 232, 234, 240
  sacred, xv–xvi, 1–2, 4, 5, 33, 37, 71, 162–3, 187, 192–3, 211, 248, 250, 252
  urban, 1, 4, 10, 12–13, 15–18, 20–1, 70, 124, 126, 128–30, 132–3, 174–5, 182, 207–8, 237, 240–4, 249–50
spatial theory, 1–3, 29–30, 75, 205, 213–14
spectatorship, 237–8, 240–2, 242 n.23, 244–5, 249, 250
  among characters, 239, 244, 246–9, 250
speech, 6, 68, 118, 154, 206, 213, 214, 217, 221, 237 n. 1, 238, 239, 240 n. 10, 241, 242, 245, 246, 247, 248, 250
spirituality, 39, 76, 88, 170, 206
stained glass, 219, 219 n. 3, 225
Stamford, Lincolnshire, 62, 67, 68, 71
  St. Katherine's Guild, 62, 71
statues, 219, 222, 223
subjectivity, 242, 244, 249–50

Tauler, Johannes, 78, 82, 85, 87
Templenagalliaghdoo, Co. Mayo, church of, 38 n. 60
tenants, 22, 42–3, 69–70
Teresa de Avila, 82, 83
Termonfeckin, Co. Louth, nunnery of, 34
Theopista, 228, 230, 233
thresholds, 1, 2, 25, 61, 74, 75, 76, 205, 206, 208, 209, 210, 214, 217, 251, 252
Timolin, Co. Kildare, nunnery of, 40–1
Tír inna mBan (Land of Women), 99–100, 102–3
Tisrara, Co. Roscommon, nunnery of, 36 fig. 2.3, 37 n. 55
tombs (*see also* crypts, undercroft), 3, 5, 54, 151 n. 63, 166, 167, 185, 186, 187, 188, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 194 fig. 12.1, 195, 195 n. 39, 197, 197 fig. 12.3, 198, 200, 200 fig. 12.4, 201, 219, 222, 226
  tombscape, 185, 186, 187, 197, 198, 200
torture, 142, 143 147, 154, 238, 250
travellers (*see also* journey, pilgrimage), xv, xvi, xvii, xviii, 4, 49, 52 n. 36, 85, 115, 124 n. 9, 127, 128, 130 n. 28, 132, 141, 234

undercroft (*see also* crypts, tomb), 187, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 198, 201, 223
urban life, 1, 4, 10, 12, 41 n. 77, 52 n. 36, 63, 65, 68, 128, 133, 173–5, 182, 186, 207, 241, 252

villages, 41–2, 157, 159, 230–3
Villers abbey, Brabant, 208, 209 n. 15, 215 n. 42, 216, 217
virgin martyrs, xvi, 142–4, 211
Virgin Mary (*see also* Lincoln, Blessed Virgin Mary Guild), xvi– xvii, 5, 48, 63, 131, 145, 158, 160, 166, 169, 170, 180, 187, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194 fig. 12.1, 195 fig. 12.2, 196, 197, 198, 222, 223, 233, 235
  Virgin of Bethlehem, xv, xvi, xvii,

xviii, 81, 142, 143, 144 n. 24, 146 n. 40, 211, 235
virginity (*see also* celibacy), xvi, xviii, 144 n. 26, 145, 199, 205 n. 4
visionary, 172–173, 182
visitors, 19, 140, 163, 172, 176, 177, 213, 220, 232
vowess, 31, 70
vows, 31, 40, 108–9, 114–15, 118, 120–1, 130

wall paintings, 213, 219, 220, 221 fig. 14.1 and n. 9, 222, 223, 224 fig. 14.2 and 14.4, 225, 228, 229 fig. 14.6, 230, 232, 233, 234
walled towns, 31, 42–3
Wheel of Fortune, 234
widows, 31, 63, 70, 119, 160 n. 19, 163, 175, 177 n. 20, 178, 189, 196, 212
wills, 20 n. 52, 21–2, 62, 70, 71, 191 n. 26
windows, 78, 163, 205, 206, 208, 209, 210, 210 n. 20, 211, 212, 213, 214, 217, 234
Wingfield, Anne, 141
wives, 16, 19, 65 n. 30–3, 67, 68, 69 n. 54, 72, 113, 114, 116, 130 n. 28, 147, 168, 178, 180, 192 n. 34, 196, 228, 230
women, 5, 31, 41 n. 80, 46, 47, 71, 76 n. 3, 85, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 104, 111, 118, 123, 129, 130 n. 28, 131, 132, 140, 142, 143, 145, 147, 148, 150, 151, 152 n. 69, 157, 159 n. 15, 161 n. 23, 163, 164, 166, 172, 175, 176, 186, 191, 207 n. 8, 209 n. 18, 210 n. 20, 212, 221, 222, 227, 228, 230, 232, 233, 234, 235, 251
  holy, 46, 56, 97, 104, 123, 129, 145, 205, 206, 207
  lay, 56 n. 52, 141, 192, 207
Woodstock, Edward, the Black Prince, 188, 190, 191, 192, 193, 196, 196 n. 41, 198

Yarborough, Lincolnshire, 68
York, 237, 243, 246
York Corpus Christi Cycle, 238–42, 245, 249 n. 48, 250
  ‘Christ Before Herod’, 238, 239, 240, 241, 244, 250
  ‘First and Second Trial Before Pilate’, 238
  ‘Trial Before Annas and Caiaphas’, 238, 243

Zacharias, 220, 221, 222